THE SHUTTERS of SILENCE

BY G. B. BURGIN

For
English Hymnal
Dec. 25, '03

Compliments
M. & Mrs. Jacobs

THE SHUTTERS OF SILENCE

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"There was the same set, tense look upon his lips. The sadness of his eyes filled her with pity—and dread."

THE SHUTTERS OF SILENCE

The Romance of a Trappist

BY

G. B. BURGIN

AUTHOR OF "TOMALYN'S QUEST," "TUXTER'S LITTLE MAID," ETC., ETC.

"We be all Souls, seeking the way."—*Kim*

ILLUSTRATED BY LOUIS AKIN

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To

My Friend

Tom Gallon

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"There was the same set, tense look upon his lips. The sadness of his eyes filled her with pity—and dread." - - - - *Frontispiece*

"'You see, even when anything escapes from us into the outer world, it always comes back again of its own free will.'" *Page 85*

"The young man was about to say he knew not what, when Winchester's voice fell on his ears and brought him to his senses." *Page 153*

"'Now I begin to know something of the sorrows of the world.'" *Page 189*

"'Sir Eustace talks all the time about himself,' she confided to Harry." - - - - *Page 225*

"'After all, he is our son.'" - *Page 287*

THE SHUTTERS OF SILENCE

PROLOGUE

A CLOCK struck eight. The hour is not considered late for the outer world, but in the Trappist monastery of Mahota it is equivalent to midnight elsewhere—

"That dusky hour
Friendliest to sleep and silence."

All the monks, with the exception of the Abbot, had already retired for the brief portion of the night which they spend in sleep. The Abbot, cumbered with many cares, sat alone, his head resting between his hands as he listened to the howling of the bitter Canadian blast. The monastery stood in a narrow valley, wooded almost to the sky-line. An autumnal wind moaned and blustered around the outlying sheds. Above the roaring of the wind came the occasional howl of a wolf, sustained, mournful, penetrating. It was a night on which one would have sheltered an enemy's dog; and the Abbot prayed for any poor traveler who might be wandering through the storm.

His room was little more than a cell—a cell furnished in the simplest manner with a narrow table,

a deal chair, a lamp, and a crucifix which hung on the wall opposite the door. The fitful flame of the lamp shone on the Abbot's careworn countenance when he got up to make his round for the night. As he went into the passage and shut the door carefully after him, a violent gust blew out his lamp. Whilst fumbling with the wick in a vain attempt to relight it, the Abbot fancied that he heard a cry.

He crossed himself nervously, for the wolf's long howl had disturbed him. "It must be my disordered nerves," he said, halting irresolutely. "No one would be abroad on such a night as this."

He waited a moment, then went towards the outer gate, carefully shielding his lamp from the bitter blast. As he neared the door, a shrill cry rose with irresistible appeal above the moaning of the wind. There was no mistaking the half-sobbing wail of a tired child.

"The saints forbid that I should turn away a wanderer from our gates." The Abbot flung the door wide open. "Enter, whoever you are," he said in kindly tones; and peered forth into the storm. His lamp again blew out, and he was left in utter darkness; at his feet sounded the convulsive sobbing of a hungry child.

As the Abbot put forth his hand, a limp, cold, tiny finger touched him.

"Enter, little one," he said gently. "Enter. Be fed and comforted."

He led the child into the corridor and shut out the storm. Relighting his lamp the Abbot turned to look at the stranger, a small, fair-haired boy of twelve, miserably clad and wet to the skin. As he stood there shrinking and shivering, a pool of water accumulated in a hollow of the stone floor.

"Why do you fear, little one?" asked the good Abbot, moved to compassion at the sight of such misery in one so young. "Come you from a farmhouse in the valley?"

The lad shook his head, ceased to sob, and gathering confidence from the Abbot's kind eyes, put out his hand imploringly.

The Abbot took it. "Come with me, my son. It is easy to see that you are a tacit disciple of La Trappe. We will go to the kitchen and find you food."

A fire still burned in the huge stove of the monastery kitchen. The Abbot, opening the red-hot door, stripped the lad and rubbed him vigorously with a rough towel; then hurried away in search of fresh garments.

He came back with the big brown robe of a lay Brother, wrapped it round the little fellow, who was lost in its ample folds, and sat him down on the floor within reach of the warmth whilst he sought for food. His search procured a bowl of cold vegetable soup and some bread. After putting the bowl on the stove to warm, the Abbot cut a great slice of bread, which he toasted at the open

fire, from time to time casting compassionate glances at the boy.

The boy watched his movements with bright violet eyes whose beauty would have moved the hardest heart to pity. When the soup was warm, the Abbot knelt on the floor by the child and held the bowl for him whilst he ate his supper. As soon as the meal was over, he picked up the lad and sat him on his knee.

The boy's head fell wearily back in the hollow of the Abbot's arm. Though the Abbot had long since severed all earthly ties, his heart thrilled with pity for this tempest-tossed waif. "Perchance you come from the outer world with a message of peace," he mused. "If you stay with us at Mahota, you shall be called 'Little Brother Colombe.'"

The child opened sleepy eyes, and clutched at the cross suspended from a chain round the Abbot's neck. Then he fell asleep again and the Abbot sat patiently nursing him by the warm fire.

Every quarter of an hour the monastery bell sounded above the wailing of the storm. When two o'clock struck, the lay Brother whose duty it was to sweep out the kitchen was surprised to see the Abbot sitting there.

The Abbot gave up the child to him, and went towards the chapel, with the long procession of his white-robed monks. The lay Brothers followed after the monks, irresistibly drawn towards

the organ calling to them out of the darkness. By the side of the warm stove the child, wrapped in his brown robe, slept peacefully.

Thus came "Brother Colombe" to the Monastery of Mahota; and from that night the shutters of silence descended and hid him from the world.

CHAPTER I

CROSSING THE RIVER

AN engine bell tolled dismally, after the manner of Canadian engines when they wish to impress the fact of approaching death—unappeasable, swift, relentless death—on vagrant cattle which have usurped the prerogative of the unfenced track. The gloom gathered, fell like a pall over the leafy world, and smothered it in silence. Here and there a pointed star shone through the dusk, twinkled, went out, re-appeared. The Laurentian Hills, darkness personified, towered to the star, which retreated before their somber approach and refused to shine upon them. From the distance came the faint lap-lap of the Ottawa against the wooden piers where a tiny steamer lay moored in readiness to take passengers over to Four Corners.

Roused by the tolling of the engine bell, the sleepy railway officials slowly awoke to life, put their pipes in their pockets, tightened their belts, and prepared to receive the incoming train from Montreal with all the customary honors. In the refreshment room the coquettish maiden who presided over the bar filled various flasks with

whisky, and daintily garnished "chunks" of appetizing pie with delicate wild flowers culled on the outskirts of the Bush. Most of her admirers generally ate the flowers as well as the pie in order to show their devotion; but the maiden was still fancy free, and looked for every train to bring to her feet a millionaire who was capable of humoring her caprices. As a matter of fact, the pie was more solid than the girl's theories of life; but her admirers were proud of her original longings for unattainable greatness, and if they could have found a millionaire would have forced him to marry her on the spot.

Presently the station buildings took shape as the bell ceased to re-echo through the night, and the vast bulk of the engine became visible. A huge black snake of carriages followed the engine, glided into the illumined station, and lay motionless upon the polished steel rails. The headlight gleamed like the fiery eye of a monster waiting for the signal to seize its prey; peremptory voices gave quick, short words of command; doors opened; boxes were flung out from the monster's interior; the quiescent snake suddenly glided forward: a bell tolled solemn farewell to the mountain side. As the engine-driver, momentarily silhouetted against the red glow of the headlight, swung himself into his place the tolling bell changed to an anguished scream and the train swung onward into the velvet gloom, leaving a man on the little

wooden platform—a man who stood lazily regarding a heap of portmanteaus and fishing-rods which a servant endeavored to reconstruct, whilst the "baggage-smasher" at the end of the retreating train smiled as one who has done his work wisely and well.

"Brought everything along, Parsons?" asked the languid man.

His valet looked dubiously at the heaped up wreckage. "I—I've got the remains, sir," he said with a deprecatory cough—the cough of one who felt that language failed to express his sentiments with regard to the "baggage-smasher."

The languid man was almost amused. "If we could only be stripped of our other trappings as easily, what a lot of bother it would save."

"Beg pardon, sir?" There was a note of helpless interrogation in Parsons' voice. He thought that the wild surroundings of the station were beginning to tell on his master's nerves. "Do we—do we——"

"What?"

"Camp here for the night, sir? It seems like it."

Bruce Winchester looked at his servant with the same languid indifference with which he had regarded the wrecking of his personal luggage; he was accustomed to seeing corners knocked off both. "It has suddenly occurred to me that in a country like this you are an anachronism, Parsons."

"Yes, sir, cert'nly, sir," said Parsons. "I don't know what it is, sir, but if you say so, why of course!" He touched his cap respectfully and stood by the mangled remains of a fishing-rod. It was a hard thing to be a stranger in a strange land, and to be called an anachronism. The depressing twilight unnerved him; he felt homesick and lonely, and would have liked some whisky.

"Take the things down to the boat and then go back to Montreal," said Winchester, interrupting his unhappy meditations.

"Go back, sir? Why, we've only just got here."

"I didn't say I was going. You'd only be in the way at Four Corners. Better go back to Montreal; it will be more comfortable for you."

"Yes, sir. Then, sir?"

"Stay there till I send for you."

"Very well, sir." Parsons picked up one of the smallest packages and disappeared in the darkness. A few minutes later he returned with a smile on his mahogany face. "Taint such a 'eathen place after all, sir," he said almost cheerfully; "there's a tram down to the water's edge. It's waiting at the other end of the station for us."

"A what? You must have taken leave of your senses."

"A tram—with two horses—a black and a chestnut. Seems like"—he gulped down the rising moisture in his throat—"Seems like 'ome

again, sir. These flitterbats are getting on my nerves. They come slap in one's face."

"Confound them, yes. So they do in mine. Where does the tram go to?"

"It takes us to the Four Corners' boat, sir. It's lying somewheres down below in the blackness. The river's about half a mile away."

"Very well. Go down in the tram with the things. I'll walk. You needn't wait for me, but can take the night train back. I'll send for you when I want you again. It may be a week or ten days—perhaps longer."

Parsons touched his cap respectfully, picked up a dressing case, and disappeared in the darkness. Although he was strongly attached to his master, as long as his wages were paid it did not much matter where he went. He was ashamed of the momentary sentiment awakened by the sight of a two-horse tram in the Ottawa valley. If he could have transferred the tram to the Old Kent Road, or some other equally savory locality, he would have preferred doing so. It looked as if it had come there by mistake and did not know how to find its way home again. As he could not assist it, he held on to the concrete fact that it was a tram of some sort, and made the most of it. At any rate, the horses were real; they champed their bits and pawed the ground in their anxiety to be off.

Winchester saw Parsons' attenuated little figure disappear within the abdomen of the tram, swung

open a gauze door, and entered the station bar. At his approach the girl who wanted to marry a millionaire came towards him with a plate of apple-pie in one hand and a cup of wishy-washy tea in the other, hesitated, retreated a step, looked doubtful. This tall, pale, aristocratic man with blue eyes and blond mustache had not the appearance of one who could successfully assimilate Canadian pie and green tea.

Winchester looked dubiously at the flowers round the pie, shook his head, and asked for some iced water. Myriad mosquitoes, attracted by the light, buzzed expectantly outside the gauze door, hungering for his blood.

As the girl brought Winchester the iced water, her blue eyes involuntarily stole a glance at his; they were so much bluer than her own. She colored, smiled faintly, dropped the glass, retreated to the bar, and brought him another. Her hand shook a little when his long brown fingers touched hers. Surely, the millionaire had come at last!

Winchester was not even amused by her evident perturbation. He knew the symptoms so well; they bored him: most things did. "The eternal feminine!" he said, with a smothered groan. "The eternal feminine! Ah! if one could only escape from it."

He put some silver into the girl's unwilling hand, opened the gauze door, and strolled into the

night. Then the mosquitoes fell upon him and found out that, unlike most Englishmen, he was not to their taste.

With a sudden pitter-patter of quick impulsive footsteps, the blue-eyed girl stood before him at the end of the platform, thrusting the money into his hand. "Take it!" she said. "Take it! I'd rather have something else!" Her lips pouted expectantly, for she was the belle of the station and accustomed to command.

"You little fool!" he said contemptuously. "You must be mad."

The girl's eyes blazed. She threw the money into the darkness. "I hate you! I hate you!"

"So!" His arm stole round her, from mere force of habit, although he had long forsworn the eternal feminine. At his touch, the girl shivered, flung her arms about his neck, kissed him passionately, and ran back to the bar. She paused a moment in the flood of light waiting to see whether he would follow her.

Winchester, apparently unperturbed by this impudent outburst from beauty in the Bush, was already walking languidly towards the dark shadow of the woods. With flaming face and passion-clenched hands, the girl, motionless as a statue, watched him disappear. She still seemed to hear borne upon the night wind, "Little fool! Little fool!" Never before in her victorious career had her advances been met with languid in-

difference. Usually, the indifference had been on her side, and she did not understand this unexpected reversal of the situation.

"I—I don't know what made me do it," she muttered to herself. "It must have been his eyes. It's a good thing my best beau didn't see me or there'd have been trouble for that stick out there, for sure." She forgot her momentary rage, laughed, shook herself coquettishly, and went back into the room to the admirers who anxiously awaited her coming.

"Bah!" said Winchester, plunging into the shadowy track. "Mosquito stings are so much franker than a woman's kiss. You recognize the venom beforehand, and take it as a matter of course."

He strolled leisurely along into the heart of the Bush. In spite of the darkness it was easy to keep the track by feeling for the tram rail with his stick, although the overhanging branches deepened the gloom with every passing moment. The cry of a whip-poor-will made him shiver; it was so like the wailing voice of a woman he had once loved but whom he now hated and despised. "Don't!" he said sharply. "Don't, Gwen, don't. Why can't you let me alone! Haven't we damned one another for all eternity, without your wanting to make matters worse here! You exhaust your emotions so quickly that you have run through the gamut of them all. In a little while you will cease

to hate me, and we shall be friends again; that is, if I live long enough."

The whip-poor-will cried once more—that cry which pierces and rends a man's soul, melts the marrow in his bones, fills him with vague fear and frenzied longing for what has been, for what can never—must never—be again—that cry which comes from the darkness of the night into the darkness of the human soul, and serves only to intensify its gloom.

Winchester drew a long breath, and stopped. "Is there no getting away from a man's past?" he cried, flinging out his arms with a despairing gesture. "No getting away? Must it be always with one, its follies rising up at every inopportune moment! Poor Mother Nature, when your children come to you helpless, battered, torn by remorse, can you not heal them? Must they bring civilization even here? Can you not put the shutters of silence between them and the world—make them forget?—pour balm upon their wounds? Must—Oh-h, I'm losing my head—I'm losing my head. It's this soft velvety darkness pressing down one's eyeballs, flutter of falling leaf, cry of frightened bird. Heal me! heal me! heal me! Ah! what's that? What's that?"

The beautiful eyes of a deer shone through the gloom, stood out from it, enfolded him with their soft regard. "Gwen!" he cried. "Do you repent? Gwen! I hate you and you hate me,

but we loved—once! Shall we never be friends again, if only for the boy's sake! I offered you all the reparation in my power, and you would not. Soon it will be too late."

The deer bounded away as Winchester emerged into the open space by the shore with a sigh of relief. "Another ten minutes of that," he said, walking down to the wooden pier—"Another ten minutes of that accursed darkness, and I'd have gone out of my mind. It's all the strain of trying to find out what has become of that poor little chap. She gave some worthless scoundrel money to bring him to Canada, so that I should not see him again, whereas if she had married me no question would ever have arisen. Now, something may crop up at any moment, and the world will cackle over the whole story."

He stepped moodily on the little steamer which was to take him to Four Corners, and, shunning the other passengers, sat down in the bow. As the boat fussed away from the landing-place, the moon came out and shone over the floating logs in the water and upon a raft at the end of a narrow opening which led to the channel. A long cord from the raft was tied to a bundle floating in the water. "Curiously-shaped tree," thought Winchester, craning forward to look at it. "They can't have taken the bark off; there's something odd about it. I've never seen a tree that shape."

The wash from the steamer's bow caused the

log to heave, and the rapidly rising moon suddenly shone down full on the face of a drowned man. His eyes were wide open, fixed with a ghastly stare on the unresponsive stars above them. Winchester's cigar fell from his mouth, floated towards the dead man, and bobbed against his swaying form, as the steamer made a sharp turn to the left previous to starting for the opposite shore.

"What's that? Was—was I dreaming?" asked Winchester, of a man who sauntered up to him. "I seem to be seeing things to-night. Is it a dead man? Why has he been left in the water in that inhuman fashion?"

"Guess it *was* a raftsman; don't know what it is now. Tumbled off a log this afternoon, and they're leaving it there for the coroner to see," coolly returned the other. "We don't move a corpse in this yer district till the coroner's had a look at it. Got a plug of tobacco, stranger? Reckon it's kind of wasteful to chuck away cigars on—that!"

He pointed to where the dead man lay, bobbing slowly about in the water, his eyes still fixed heavenward with the same unreasoning stare. It was evident, as the steamer made another turn, that Death had taken him by surprise.

"Horrible!" said Winchester. "Horrible! His comrades must be a set of heartless brutes!"

The stranger was inclined to be argumentative.

"I dunno," he said ruminatively, "I dunno,

mind you, as it ain't cleaner and nicer'n bein' boxed up in a coffin. He's got the whole of the river to himself to-night. You, bein' a stranger, don't quite seem to git the hang of it. If," he continued, feeling in his pocket with an air of speculative inquiry, "there is a God, stranger, He'll size him up just as handy in the water there, p'raps better for all we know. You don't chaw?"

Winchester did not "chaw." It had not occurred to him that tobacco could be utilized in so pregnant a form, particularly in the presence of the dead; and he curtly said as much.

"Guess you ain't the only Englishman as has come to Canady to learn suthin," retorted the stranger. "Dead or not dead, one's got to have tobacco, somehow." He sulkily turned on his heel and left Winchester to his own reflections. No one likes to be unexpectedly confronted with Death, and, in this respect, Winchester resembled other men. Death reminded him of things about which he did not care to think.

"Wonder whether Maitland Fraser will be at the Four Corners' Wharf to meet me," he reflected, in answer to the soft chunk-chunk of the paddles. They seemed to ask perpetual questions of his inner consciousness—that inner consciousness which was the occasion of his present visit to Canada. "I 'did' him well when he was in London so many years ago; he is anxious to see me again. If Gwen has lied to me about the boy's

whereabouts I must have someone to fall back upon. Besides, it was Maitland Fraser who helped her London agents to get the boy away from England. I wonder what humbugging story they told Fraser! The boy must be eighteen now. Eighteen! Poor little devil! Eighteen! Does God pity a lad of eighteen who learns for the first time what men and women—especially women—are like? If the boy does fall into my hands, he shall see all sorts of the latter, so that he may learn to know them."

The electric lights of a saw-mill flooded the Ottawa's brown flood. It seemed to Winchester that he was on the Bosphorus watching the lanterns gleaming from Abdul's marble palaces. Gayly lighted little white houses in the shadow of the Bush still further helped the illusion. Above the houses was a black sky-line of somber trees. Presently the boat fussed up to the long, narrow wharf, sent forth a penetrating hoot, and Winchester awoke from his reverie as a tall, thin man, with eagle nose and kindly eyes, jumped on the gangway.

"That you, Winchester?" asked the newcomer. "Glad you've got here at last, although you've taken your time over it. Come right along to my rooms at the Courthouse, and I'll fix you up a square meal. You must be hungry after your crossing. My place is rough, but I have your supper ready for you."

Winchester nodded his thanks, left Fraser to bring his belongings ashore (he was accustomed to look on whilst others did things for him) and strode up the wooden wharf to where the rickety stage awaited the infrequent stranger, and did its best to jolt him to pieces when it got him. He remained patiently in the shadow of the stage until Fraser rejoined him with a shattered portmanteau.

"They'll bring the others up presently," Fraser said cheerfully; "that is, all that's left of them. You want more substantial things for this country. Now, Lajeunesse, we're in a hurry. Drive like—oh, you know how you generally drive."

"You bet, I know," said the driver. "If I didn't you wouldn't be here now." His whip hissed snake-like through the air, the horses plunged forward at a wild gallop, and Winchester and Fraser collided with each other at frequent intervals in a manner which rendered conversation impossible. At the end of the wharf the driver turned sharply to the right, then to the left, lashed his frenzied steeds again upon every raw spot on their attenuated bodies, and stopped in front of the Courthouse with a yell as he pulled them up on their haunches. "Reckon I'm half a minute ahead of time," he said, holding out a huge silver watch to Fraser, who promised to keep the fact in undying remembrance, but implored the driver not to do it again; it was too trying for ordinary mortals who wished to die of old age.

"Oh, that's nuthin'," said the driver, dissembling his pride. "I'd ha' got three quarters of a minute ahead if I'd reckoned you was in a real hurry." He drove away, and, although there was no necessity for speed, his pace was like unto that of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, on whom, apparently, he had modeled himself.

"Thank God you didn't think we were in a hurry, or we shouldn't have got here alive." Fraser waved his hand to the retreating driver, and turned to Winchester. "You're thin. Ain't you well?" He eyed Winchester critically. "Come in and get something to eat; that's what's the matter with you."

Winchester was not really hungry. Besides, the play of the moonlight on the tin roof of the Courthouse pleased his eye—reminded him of a silver sea. "I don't think I'm hungry, after all," he said, standing back a little in order to get a better view of the roof.

"Not hungry! Nonsense! The man who begins by neglecting his stomach in a strange country will end by neglecting God in his own."

"With most men, in all countries, God and stomach are synonymous terms, although the latter has more worshipers than the former," said Winchester indifferently; but he followed Fraser, after a parting glance at the peaceful-looking little white houses which lay sleeping like tired children huddled together under the moonlight. Tall rock

elms bent over them the shelter of protecting boughs, and beyond the elms the river flowed silently towards the Falls. Winchester could hear the voice of a raftsman singing:

"I close my eye jus' so an' see de place w'ere I am born--
I close my ear an' lissen to de musique of de horn;
Dat's horn ma dear ole moder blow—an' only t'ing she play,
Is 'viens donc vite, Napoleon,—pêche toi pour votre souper.'"

"Supper is ready," said Fraser's impatient voice. "Come, Winchester. Don't stand looking at mere scenery when the material good of supper awaits you. We can live without love, but we can't live without eating."

Winchester sighed heavily. All his life he had followed after material gods. Now, he was tired of them. One by one, they had failed him; one by one, they had faded away, leaving him a lonely, disappointed, cynical dreamer. He had behaved badly to a woman. When he wanted to behave well to her, she had become infected by his cynicism, and had refused to allow him to make the only reparation in his power. He could have forgiven her had her reasons been less worldly; but, although she had been temporarily carried off her feet by her passion for him, she had deliberately married an old man because he was wealthy, whereas a penniless subaltern like Winchester could never hope to give her a good position in the world. Then, she had smuggled her boy out of the country, instead of letting Winchester have access to

him. This was the deed which he could not forgive her; he intended to make her suffer for it, but he must first find the boy. Fraser had, doubtless, received instructions to help him in his search, and matters must take their course. Much would depend on the boy. He would reach her through him.

He joined the impatient Fraser, after another appreciative glance at the village. Perhaps the moonlight had robbed that face in the water of its strained horror! He felt that his own face, as he looked at the past, bore the same expression. The only wonder was that people had never noticed it. Of course they would some day. He saw it so plainly himself.

CHAPTER II

LADY GESTE SCORES

WHEN they went into the Courthouse, Maitland Fraser watched Winchester with ill-dissembled curiosity as the latter pretended to eat the somewhat primitive meal set before him. It was so primitive that it did not seem worth all the fuss that Fraser had made about it. The lawyer's rooms were on the ground floor of the Courthouse, and consisted of an office, sitting, and bedroom. All the rooms had barred windows which opened on the jail yard, and the walls were two feet thick, as if the original builders of the jail had resolved to frustrate every attempt to escape from it. There were spiders in the corners, and it was evident from the damp walls that the sun never succeeded in reaching them. The sitting room was furnished in a hurried, haphazard manner strongly suggestive of its occupier. There was a rocking-chair in each corner, and a more or less ill-used and patchy bear-skin on the floor: the chairs did not admit of classification; some had one broken leg, others were minus an arm; and they all wore an air of protest against their rough usage by people who had occupied an

illiterate leisure in whittling away their most prominent features. One or two highly-colored chromos on the walls suggested that in his leisure moments Fraser had artistic aspirations.

"If you're ready to turn in, you take the bed," suggested Fraser when supper was over. "You're accustomed to the luxuries of civilization; I'm not —fortunately for me. I prefer the floor; it's cooler this weather."

Winchester, who was accustomed to roughing it in various quarters of the globe, rose from the table, went to the narrow, barred window, and gazed across the moonlit prison yard as if he saw someone there. There were heaps of stones scattered about, in order that the prisoners might pursue their geological studies at sunrise. "I'm a bit nervous to-night, Fraser," he said. "Saw a dead man in the water on the other side of the river. Took him for a log at first, and then suddenly discovered that he wasn't a log. He did stare so without seeing me. There was a face just like his peering in at the window a moment ago; at least, it seemed to me exactly the same."

"Very likely; the jail's full of lunatics waiting to be transferred to the Provincial Asylum. They all have that ghastly drowned sort of look as if they had submerged their souls, and their bodies had only accidentally escaped the same fate. One of them has probably got out of his cell; they're always worse when there's a full moon: it seems to

set them trying to think of what they once were. Then they get restless and want to rove round. Have some whisky?" He hospitably pushed the bottle towards Winchester, and began to smoke a rank cigar.

Both cigar and whisky offended Winchester's fastidious taste. "No, thanks, Fraser." He drummed idly on the window with his fingers, "Of course, you know why I've come to Canada?"

Fraser nodded. "Of course. I've had full instructions about it; but, apart from business, it's very jolly to see you again. Need we go into business to-night? You're probably tired after your journey. Meet any ice coming out? It's pretty dangerous up in the Straits of Belle Isle; but I'd rather meet an iceberg than one of your society belles; it's not so cold."

Winchester ignored the relative temperatures of women and icebergs; they both seemed equally uninteresting. "To-night's as good as any other," he said indifferently. "I suppose you've heard from Lady Geste's solicitor of the reason for my coming here? They found out that you are the representative lawyer in the place, although of course it would never enter their heads that we had met before."

Fraser nodded. "Oh, yes, I've heard from them—several times."

"And you know the whole story?"

"A part of it—as much as a woman ever tells,

even to her solicitors. But my instructions are precise, so I didn't worry about the rest of it."

"Only a part of it! I think I'll change my mind, and have some whisky."

He poured out the whisky and drank it neat. Fraser concealed his astonishment, for Winchester had been an abstemious man when the lawyer had met him in London a few years ago. Now he looked a physical wreck—a man who had not long to live, and who was kept alive by the desire to do a certain thing.

"I didn't know when we met in London that I should ever see you again. You're changed, too. Oh, yes, I know what you are thinking about me." Winchester put down his empty glass, and tried to forget that the poor lunatic had again glued his face to the window, and was endeavoring by uncouth gestures to attract his attention.

"Oh, yes, I'm changed—for the worse." Fraser endeavored to survey as much of himself as possible. He was so full of angles that he gave it up. "But then you must make allowances for costume. They wouldn't stand my swagger clothes at Four Corners; in fact, people said they'd tar and feather me if I didn't immediately conform to their ideas of fashion in clothes and employ a local tailor. This"—he again regarded himself with humouous pity—"This is the appalling result."

"This," was not suggestive of Bond Street.

Fraser's hair and beard were as ill-cut as his clothes; they projected in all sorts of angles. He went to a drawer and took out a bundle of papers. From a back view of him, Winchester endeavored to reconstruct the smart young lawyer who had made a flying visit to England some years before. The attempt failed. Provincialism claimed Fraser for its own, and, as his long ungainly form swayed back to the table, he admitted the justice of the claim in every limb.

"Better smoke," he said, taking another rank cigar from his pocket with manifest enjoyment, and pushing it over to Winchester. One end of it had broken off in his pocket.

Winchester curtly refused. "The story! How much do you know of it? It's not a savory one if you know only a fragment of it."

Fraser methodically unfastened his papers as if he were about to open a case before the court. "Twenty years ago, you, a subaltern in the Guards, met a certain young lady. She was the beautiful but ambitious daughter of a country clergyman, and was so tired of provincial life in England that she was ready to do anything to get away from it; you were the heavily 'dipped'—I believe that is the correct phrase—son of a country squire who 'went the pace.'"

"Never mind phrases." Winchester frowned and shifted uneasily in his chair. "I was nearly done for at the time I met the lady in question; in

fact, we neither of us had a farthing, and her father hated military men to such an extent that it was almost a mania with him. She simply dared not let him know that she even knew me."

"I wouldn't take any more of that whisky if I were you; it's stronger than you think, innocent as it looks."

Winchester frowned again, but pushed away his glass.

"You, being in debt, dare not marry her; she, being ambitious, declined to marry you, although she looked upon the meeting as a temporary means of escape from the humdrum life of a vicar's daughter. Her father never even had a suspicion of the truth; and so you——" He hesitated. A momentary tinge of color suffused his yellow cheek. He was an Elder in his own religious denomination, and tried to live up to it out of business hours.

"We dispensed with the usual formalities, and bolted together, although the whole thing was so well managed that no one ever knew anything about it. And no one would have known anything had it not been for the usual consequences of such mad folly and wickedness."

"Quite so."

"Is that all you know?"

"Not quite."

Winchester smiled cynically. "Did Lady Geste's solicitors tell you that two years after our —our——"

"Entanglement?" prompted Fraser, with the blush of an Elder who finds himself in a somewhat equivocal position.

"Well, yes, 'entanglement,' if you like to call it so. Did Lady Geste's solicitors tell you that when, two years after our 'entanglement,' I came into some money and, for the child's sake, offered to marry her, as I had promised to do at the first opportunity, she laughed in my face, told me that she preferred Sir John Geste, as he was the better match socially, and, in fact, was about to be married to him? She said that I never could see the humorous side of things, and that we should not get on together. Her brief experiment had convinced her of that, and, for the rest of her life, she pined for respectability. She must have had enough of it with Geste, for he was the personification of potted respectability. He always looked as if he ought to wear a halo and stand in a stained-glass window. I suppose you didn't hear all that?"

Fraser methodically looked through his papers. "No, I have no instructions to that effect," he said doubtfully. "In fact, the—the child is represented as being yours and Lady Geste's sister's. That is the assumption on which I have been instructed to act."

"Her sister's! Why, she never had a sister, thank Heaven!"

"Now that the sister is dead," continued Fraser,

"Lady Geste, as the only person who is interested in the matter, is quite willing that you should have the custody of the child, if you care to do so."

"If I care!" said the other mechanically. "Lady Geste is a marvelous woman! Hitherto, I have failed to do her justice. I ought to have remembered that she is five years older than myself. And she declined to marry me when I found out what was about to happen, although I would have risked everything. She said that marriage would be our social ruin; that the world would forgive us anything but the hopelessly commonplace. She has nerves of iron, and the secret has been well kept."

"Then why imperil it now?" Fraser asked sharply. "Why can't you let things be as they are? You can't possibly care for the child after allowing it to go to the devil all these years. Let the boy alone."

The usually impassive Winchester jumped from his chair. "I can't, Fraser, I can't."

"Why not?"

"I've suddenly developed a conscience, and the doctors tell me I have only a few months to live. Besides, the boy was such a beautiful, fair-haired, little chap. I used to go and see him until he was five. Then she found out how fond I was of him (we had got to hate each other by that time) and she was afraid people would put two and two together if I went to visit the child, so she spirited

him away. She grew fond of old Geste, and her great anxiety was that he should not find her out. All the same, she worried the life out of him by her vagaries. I have never seen the boy from that time to this, poor little beggar. He must think me a Judas for allowing myself to betray him in so heartless a fashion."

Fraser looked at him in amazement. "I didn't imagine——"

"No, I suppose you wouldn't. Perhaps it is because I hate her so that I am anxious to find the lad. I had an interview with her before I left England; she looked charming in her widow's weeds and not a day older than thirty; but I fancy that the late Sir John must have had rather an unpleasant time. She intimated that if I still wished to marry her (my property has doubled in value) it was not too late, and that we need not see too much of one another. I took up my hat and told her that she was a middle-aged enigma which I did not care to solve, and that, as far as I was concerned, I did not intend to repeat my offer of marriage, even for the child's sake."

"And then?"

"She became flippantly melodramatic. Threw off the mask in the approved Adelphi style, and said that I bored her to death, but she had thought it right to give me another chance of picking up the threads of our lives; that I should never find the boy; that she had purposely placed a barrier be-

tween him and me which nothing could ever break down." He looked questioningly at the lawyer, but Fraser's impassive countenance told him nothing.

"So?"

"I lost my temper and said that unless she put me into communication with the boy, I would tell the whole story to the Society papers and she would find herself cut by everyone. That was more than she could stand. She shrugged her shoulders, laughed, and told me, to my great surprise, that the lad was in Canada. She had lost sight of him for some years, but had recently found him again."

"Yes," said Fraser unemotionally. "I am instructed to admit that the lad is in Canada."

"Remember our friendship, and don't put any obstacle in the way of my meeting him. I don't care for many people, but, somehow, I—I liked the lad."

"On the contrary, my instructions are to offer you every facility for seeing him. I would not have taken up the case had they been otherwise. There is only one condition, but it is rather important. You are to promise never to tell him his mother's name."

"I am not likely to do that." He smiled grimly. "Such a mother would hamper any son. Wherever he is, it is much better that he should not know that she is his mother, although I intend to put them in communication with one another."

"You promise? By all that you hold sacred in this world and the next, you promise never to tell your son his mother's name?"

"I promise, by all that I hold sacred in this world and the next, never, in any circumstances, to tell my son his mother's name."

"You further promise to provide for his future to the best of your ability, should you consider there is a possibility of his having a future, and not to molest Lady Geste in any way?"

"Does her ladyship want any written guarantee?" asked Winchester, with a sneer. "The rôle of affectionate parent is so new to me—and to her—that we may be pardoned if we make mistakes. We made one mistake which will take us a lifetime to get over; it won't do to make any more. I, for one, shall not have time to live down the consequences."

Fraser again consulted his notes. "No; your word is quite sufficient. All Lady Geste wants is your promise. She thinks you will soon get tired of this fad and leave the lad alone. Am I to understand that you promise?"

"Yes; I promise. Money can buy most things; and I have no doubt I can secure the lad's future, if it be necessary for him to have a future. Should it prove to be as variegated as his parents' past, he will have a busy time before him."

"I don't think it will." There was a pitying

note in Fraser's voice which did not escape Winchester. "Perhaps we'd better turn in. There's nothing more to be done to-night." Fraser carefully put away his papers in a huge iron safe, handed Winchester a candle, and, with the aid of a bearskin, began to arrange a shakedown on the floor.

Winchester took the proffered candle as he moved towards the door of the innermost room. "By the way," he said carelessly, "you haven't yet told me where the boy is? Do we travel far to find him?"

"No," said Fraser, his face turned to the wall as he shook a cloud of dust from the ragged old bearskin which he had picked up from the floor. "No, I think not. We don't go far."

"Then why don't you tell me where he is?" Winchester came back impatiently into the room. "Why don't you, I say? Is it such a deadly secret? Where is he?"

Fraser faced round desperately, bearskin in hand, as if to interpose it between himself and Winchester.

The face of the maniac in the jail yard flattened itself vacantly against the window as Winchester drew a deep breath. "He's—not—there?" he asked, pointing to the grinning idiot outside. "My God, Fraser, don't tell me he's there?"

"No, he's not there." Fraser looked through the window, and breathed a relieved sigh to see

the idiot's white face disappear. "No, he's not there."

"Then where, in Heaven's name, is he?"

The maniac without began to shriek as a jailer led him away. There was the sound of a hurried scuffle, then—silence. In the yellow flame of the candle, Winchester's face looked older, more careworn. His eyes had lost their cynical light; they were filled with a fear of some terrible revelation. He made another step nearer Fraser. "I might have known that she would play me some devil's trick; it's her idea of the humor of life: she thinks it fun to harass me into my grave. If you don't tell me at once, I'll make you."

Fraser did not blench. "You must know? You won't give up the search and go home?"

"No, I won't give it up; and I must know."

"Very well, then, only don't blame me for it. I had nothing to do with it. Your son is in the Trappist monastery at Mahota."

The candle crashed to the floor. "In the—Trappist monastery—at—Mahota!"

"In the Trappist monastery at Mahota. His mother gave an old servant fifty pounds to take him to Canada. The old servant drank, ill-treated the boy, and he ran away in the depth of winter to the Trappist monastery at Mahota. The Abbot took pity on him, and he is there now."

"But it's horrible—horrible! How long has he been there?"

"Seven years."

Winchester picked up the candle and relit it with a steady hand. "Good-night!" he said abruptly. "A Trappist monk! Even his mother can't reach him there. But if she has saved him from meeting a woman like herself, she has done one deed which shall be accounted to her for righteousness. She *shall* meet him now; and if she gets fond of him as I did, I'll take him away in my turn. Good-night."

Fraser threw down the bearskin in a heap. "Good-night. Between the pair of you and the monastery, it doesn't seem as if your son had much chance. He'd better take the final vows."

Winchester came back again. "Oh, I'm not so bad as all that. The lad shall have his chance if I live long enough to give it him." He lingered a moment.

"Anything else?" asked the perplexed Fraser.

"Only this: I'm not so bad as you think me. I'll see that he does not come to any harm, whether I like him or not."

"Oh, you'll like him," said Fraser, as if the statement did not admit of discussion. "It seems to me that the most important question is whether he'll like you."

"True," said Winchester. "True—I hadn't thought of that. Good-night!"

"Good-night." Fraser remained staring after him. "Used to be one of the nicest chaps going,

before he got this bee in his bonnet. That Lady Geste must be an extraordinary woman. She might just as well have married him and made herself safe. Now, someone will rake up the story and cause no end of trouble. Our indiscretions sometimes serve us well; sometimes they don't; and Winchester's seem to be worrying him pretty badly. Looks as if he'd got heart disease, poor fellow. I suppose the world can't worry along without women. Seems a pity, though. They're always doing something silly, and then wanting to be shielded from the consequences of their folly. Come to that, men are pretty nearly as bad." He drew a torn blanket over him with an air of luxurious content. "Now, if I were to marry, I'd have to give up solid comfort like this. No, sir!" In five minutes he was snoring tranquilly.

CHAPTER III

MAHOTA

WINCHESTER awoke early next morning, feverish and unrefreshed. His first consciousness of dawn was punctuated with persistent snores from the corner of the adjoining room in which Fraser still slept on the ragged bearskin. He seemed to be telling unpleasant truths to a refractory client and tossed restlessly from side to side. Occasionally he grunted, and then subsided into comparative silence—the silence of a just man who has much to endure, but who is confident that he is in the right.

As the light, checkered by iron window bars, stole into the dusty room, Winchester lay for a few minutes idly speculating with regard to his whereabouts. Returning consciousness made things clear to him. He struggled into wakefulness with an effort, appropriated Fraser's tub of cold water, and prepared to set forth on his quest, although he did not anticipate anything very startling at the end of it. Probably a donation to the monastery funds would set things right with the Abbot; but he did not relish Lady Geste's triumph at having sent him on such a fool's errand, when it was her

part to have seen that the lad came to no harm. For many years past she had provided him with unexpected sensations; now, she seemed to be overdoing it a little, and he could not help feeling that her desire to triumph over him was more conspicuous than her good taste. She never realized the consequences of her impulsive acts, and was always sorry for them when they were brought home to her. He did not, for one instant, bitterly as he disliked her, suppose that she had ever imagined the inevitable results of the monastic life and their influence in molding the character of a boy. Besides, after all, why should he trouble himself about the lad? What did he, in the brief time which yet remained to him, want with human affection? He had contrived to exist very comfortably without it for a great number of years, and there was no reason why he should not continue to live in similar comfort for the rest of his days; that is, if Lady Geste would allow him to do so. It was on the cards, too, that the society of a son trained to perpetual silence could hardly be considered cheerful. Still, when he remembered Lady Geste's biting loquacity, it pleased him to think that the lad was not likely to follow in his mother's footsteps: she had so much to say that she was a kind of human Niagara which perpetually flooded the silence with small talk.

He noiselessly passed Fraser without awaking him, and, unbarring the heavy door, made his way

into the open. A little fresh air would be more than acceptable after his unwonted indulgence in Fraser's whisky. Such whisky, too! The mere thought of it made him shudder. Fraser must have the stomach of an Indian or an iron-clad, to be able to assimilate it without any direful results.

The little steamer which had brought Winchester to Four Corners the night before, lay at the end of the wharf, about a quarter of a mile away, with blue wood smoke curling lazily heavenward from her tiny funnel. The distant mountains on the opposite shore had lost the terror of formless darkness; they were cheerful, green, living things, and not the amorphous masses which had impressed him so painfully the previous night. In the village itself, a few brawny natives stood at their doors in all the unfettered ease of primitive toilets. Cows came slowly forth from adjacent sheds, kicked lazily at yelping curs in the stolid, one-legged fashion peculiar to their kind, and set off in leisurely pursuit of pasture. Winchester's prevailing impression, as the sun slowly lit up the somber foliage of the graceful rock elms, was that Nature scorned to hurry in Four Corners, for even the potato-bugs did not get out of his way, and risked a painful death from his loitering footsteps as he strolled slowly down the quaint wooden wharf, swallowing huge draughts of fresh air. When he came back at the same unenterprising

gait, he found, to his intense surprise, that he was hungry, and impatiently awaited Fraser's emergence from the land of dreams.

In due time Fraser came forth, pipe in mouth, after the leisurely matutinal manner of Four Corners. When breakfast was over, and Winchester had done ample justice to the lake trout and wild strawberries set before him, they started for Mahota. Under the cheerful influence of the warm sunlight, even Fraser seemed less gaunt; his weird costume fitted in with his surroundings; it also harmonized with that of their fellow passengers on the steamer, most of whom leaned over the vessel's side and spat reflectively at the brown water, as if anxious to contribute their quota towards keeping up the height of the river. Every now and again the boat, after much fussing and preliminary whistling, rounded a jutting point, landed four barrels and a pig on the primitive wooden wharf which ran out into the river, and steamed away to the next little village, there to repeat the performance, sometimes, however, substituting a placid cow for the pig. As a rule, the pig objected to the landing-place, no matter how prepossessing it looked, and filled the air with shrill but unavailing protests at being deposited there in so summary a fashion.

At one o'clock, when even the disembarkation of pigs began to pall upon the passengers, the proceedings were enlivened by lunch, and towards

three the steamer entered a beautiful bay, with a green mountain range running down to the water's edge. Halfway up the mountain side gleamed the white walls of a little shrine, and, topping the loftiest peak of the range, stood a huge cross, the most significant feature in the countryside. The gold upon the cross glittered and shone and caught the eye with irresistible attraction.

"We've arrived. Mahota is on the other side of the mountain," said Fraser. "The monastery stands about halfway down the valley."

"But that must be five or six miles away," objected Winchester. "How are we going to get there?"

"Oh, we can't help that. A buggy will soon take us over. We can easily hire one in the village itself."

"Will the monks let us in when we get there?"

"Of course they will. Why shouldn't they? Besides, I have personal letters to the Abbot. I thought it just as well to be prepared for all emergencies. There's a hostelry in connection with the monastery, too, and we can stay there as guests. As long as we behave ourselves, and don't disregard the rules, the monks won't raise any objection to our staying. They're not very well off, and every little donation helps. The monks live on water and vegetables, and the cost of each monk's food is only a cent a day, poor chap; but they never make any regular charge for

entertaining travelers. The Abbot prefers to trust to their generosity."

"I don't like the idea of sneaking in there as a guest, and then taking the boy away. It doesn't seem the square thing to do."

"You forget that a wing of the monastery is devoted to casual guests. As I said just now, no charge is made; you may pay what you please, and, in return, the monks give you—a fine assortment of vegetables! I never knew there were so many vegetables in the world until I first went to Mahota. After a while you begin to wish that there were not quite so many; you want the stomach of an ox to digest them all. Do you think that you can live on vegetables for a day or two? The monks also make a wine which is generally considered more fatal than the vegetables; but it's quicker. You flee from the Scylla of vegetables to the Charybdis of home-made wine. Can you manage to live on such food? I didn't like to bring any eatables; it seems so ungracious. Try the food, but beware of the wine. A Canadian might worry through after drinking it, but if you're an invalid you'd better be careful."

"Oh, yes, I'll try. No wine that was ever made can possibly be as bad as that whisky of yours; it's worse than vitriol. I can feel it still."

Fraser passed over the ungrateful allusion to his whisky in silence, for he was conscious of its shortcomings. Not even a lawyer could defend so

aggressive a liquid as Four Corners whisky. Fortunately, at this moment when both of them were inclined to be testy, there was a cry of "All aboard!" The steamer discharged them at a substantial stone wharf, took a couple of black-gowned priests as passengers in their places, and glided away on the surface of the brown flood like a white swan.

Winchester, as he followed Fraser up the wharf, felt an unreasoning sense of desolation at the friendly, fussy steamer's departure. Although there were weeds growing all over the streets of the semi-deserted village (its principal occupants were a dog and a cow who seemed to be the joint owners), a magnificent stone church reared lofty spires along the river bank. Immediately facing the water stood an avenue of poplars, so ancient that the partly decayed trunks had been filled in with masonry to protect them from the ravages of time. Beneath these stately poplars walked black-gowned figures bending over their breviaries. A few swarthy, moccasined Indians (they had lost all the virtues of Nature in an ardent pursuit of the vices of Civilization) loafed in the sunlight and evinced their hatred for any kind of exertion by declining to get out of the way of a dilapidated buggy which was being reluctantly drawn to the wharf by a venerable white horse.

And so, wandering down the quiet, weed-grown streets, overlooked by quaint wooden cottages

guiltless of style, each having its yellow cur in undisturbed possession of the doorway,

> "They came unto a land
> In which it seemèd always afternoon.
> . . . The languid air did swoon,
> Breathing like one that hath a weary dream."

Two more dogs, overcome by the heat, peacefully slept in the center of the main thoroughfare, and took their chances of total annihilation with a sublime confidence that no horse in the neighborhood had sufficient energy to run over anybody or anything. The place was so drowsily quiet that Winchester looked around from time to time and yawned in sympathy with the brown Indian women lazily swinging in gay hammocks beneath the gaudily painted verandas. A black-and-gray woodpecker stared listlessly out at the opposite fence, then feebly drummed against the boards of his cage in a vain search for succulent grubs, and also went to sleep.

When they came to the little inn at the top of the main thoroughfare, a very fat landlord slowly woke up, and, after much haggling, provided them with the thinnest apology for a horse that Winchester had ever seen. In addition to many fantastic peculiarities of construction, there was something wrong about its tail, and it was blind in the right eye. A small boy, still rubbing his eyes with grimy knuckles, unwillingly harnessed this ancient steed to an exceedingly rickety old buggy. When

it was pointed out to him that one trace was longer than the other, he patiently waited while Winchester put it right. The boy was even dirtier than the buggy, and wore an ample pair of old trousers girt round the waist by a red sash. Once he had convinced himself that he was awake, his eyes twinkled with fun as he selected a couple of supple switches for the benefit of his meager steed, which looked mournfully conscious of the difficulties of the mountain way and the weight of the passengers whom the buggy was expected to carry.

When the conditions had been finally fixed for the hire of this ancient vehicle, the horse crawled slowly through the decaying village, as if reluctant to look his last upon it, whilst the stout landlord stood gazing after them as he muttered incoherent farewells.

> "His voice was thin as voices from the grave,
> And deep asleep he seemed, yet all awake"—

to the consciousness that nothing but a miracle could ever make his lean chestnut go faster than four miles an hour.

Winchester soon realized the same thing, took away the boy's switches, and ordered him to let the horse go his own gait. When the urchin made eloquent protest against this suicidal policy, Winchester, with an unusual accession of energy, suddenly dropped him out of the buggy into the dusty road, and told him to trot alongside. The horse, missing the flagellation of the switch, at once

stopped, and the boy remained sitting in the roadway.

"It will be a dollar extra, this way, monsieur," said the boy, picking himself up and rubbing a bare toe meditatively in the dust.

"What for?" asked Fraser. "We don't want to buy the rig."

"For the extra time; I cannot properly encourage the horse, monsieur, if I have no whip. And he is a coward; he knows it."

"Better let the boy get in again," said Fraser, "or we shall never reach the monastery;" and Winchester reluctantly allowed the urchin once more to "encourage" the horse.

As the tired beast plodded slowly along, Winchester began to experience a suffocating sensation in his throat. This close proximity to his son appealed to all the tenderness in his nature. He recalled their last game together, when the little fellow had ridden on his knee and lisped to him to come again soon. He also recalled his dismay at the sight of the deserted cottage on the occasion of his next visit, and how he had vainly tried to find out where the boy had been taken.

Fraser watched him closely, and Winchester, conscious of this searching scrutiny, adopted an indifferent air. He talked to Fraser of the flashing-eyed *habitant* women, who stood at the doors of the dainty little farmhouses to see them pass, and even affected an enthusiasm for the masses of

flaming hollyhocks which put to shame the modest hues of the wayside roses. But all the time Winchester shamefacedly admitted to himself, as the horse toiled slowly up the dusty road, and the boy threw surreptitious stones at it from a store under the buggy seat, that he was a father—a father who had not seen his son for thirteen years. He seemed to be looking on at himself in the rôle of parent; and there was a grim humor in the thought that he, who had never cared for anyone except Lady Geste, should be going to a Trappist monastery to see so tangible a reminder of an early folly. Had it not been for Fraser's presence, he would have turned back again without visiting the monastery. Wherever he went, there seemed to be no escape from the presence of death.

He began, almost unconsciously, to scrutinize the monastery, an imposing edifice of black stone built halfway up the valley side. The main building was in the form of a quadrangle; on the crest of the hill overlooking it ranged a long line of maples. White-painted wooden galleries ran round the wing of the monastery which was set apart for the reception of guests. A little stream babbled through the bottom of the valley, and at the head of the stream stood an old mill which had been partially destroyed by fire. Now, twining creepers gave the ruins an aspect of venerable decay. At the entrance to the valley, in startling

contrast to the magnificent new monastery, stood a little log hut, the original home of the Trappists in this once barren but now smiling valley, every inch of which was carefully cultivated. A little to the right of the monastery a herd of calves fed in a fenced pasture. A lay Brother walked across the field, his head bent in meditation, and so absorbed was he that he failed to notice the importunities of half a dozen of the animals, which were accustomed to feed from his hand. The hills opposite the monastery were also densely crested with maples, so that in the intense summer heat it was difficult to escape a sense of oppression; the air could not circulate freely, and the rapidly clouding sky gave indications of an approaching thunderstorm. As the distant horizon suddenly changed to a dull black, the tall poplars before the monastery doors swayed together in vague terror of the coming storm, every leaf on every bough shivering at each gust of plangent wind.

In front of the monastery was a large garden, gayly laid out with flowers, and containing long strips of buckwheat for the nourishment of the bees. Winchester, with his customary love of detail, unconsciously counted a hundred and fifty hives under the thriving elms which had been planted by the Trappists. It seemed to him ominous that he should arrive there together with the thunderstorm—that Nature should thus weep over the reunion of father and son.

A few large raindrops fell upon the panting body of the wretched horse as it crawled to a standstill at the entrance to the monastery, and stood with trembling legs and hanging head imploring compassion from the servants of God. A sweet-faced monk opened the door and silently greeted the travelers from the top of the steps. Inscriptions were printed on the walls all round him. One ran, "S'il est dur de vivre à Mahota il est doux d'y mourir"; another, "Une Eternité de bonheur"; and a third, "Etre avec Jésus est un doux Paradis"; a fourth, "Etre sans Jésus est un dur Enfer."

In answer to Fraser's inquiry as to whether they could stay at the monastery for a few days, the white-robed monk bowed his head, said that they were welcome, picked up their bags, and informed them that supper would be ready at five o'clock. Then he gave them the numbers of their respective rooms and pointed them out.

Before they reached the end of the long corridor the storm burst, and Winchester, as he entered the little room allotted to him, struggled with a sickening restlessness. It was as if the elements themselves angrily protested against the object of his visit, and were resolved to delay him as much as possible.

His room was little larger than an ordinary cell. On the white-washed wall to the left hung a set of rules for the guidance of visitors. What

most surprised Winchester was to find an electric light suspended from the ceiling. The ceiling itself was of plain pinewood. Someone had painted the woodwork of the cell a dull green, the deal floor lacked a carpet, and there was a deep window seat which would have been eminently comfortable had it contained any cushions; in its naked simplicity it was forlornly uninviting. On the right stood a small black iron bedstead; it was covered with a mattress stuffed with straw, and furnished with two hard pillows and a light coverlet. Beyond the bedstead was a small oak table with a dingy dimity cover. Against the wall hung a broken crucifix and an oil lamp. On the left of the door a clothes-press jammed itself against a washstand on which stood a small white basin. A little looking-glass hung over the washstand, and a very small towel covered the top of the jug containing the water. There was a minute cake of soap beside the jug; the comb and brush had seen better days; one had many gaps and the other was more than bald. The remaining furniture consisted of one chair and a coil of hot-water pipes for heating the cell in winter.

Winchester, after making an exhaustive inventory of the contents of his cell, strode to the window, flung it open, and, with the help of the lightning, began to read the rules on the wall. By this intermittent aid, he soon found out he was required to note that the monastery was not an

infirmary, hotel, or pleasure-house, but a house of God, and that only those were welcome to its shelter who wished to live in peace, silence, and the solitude of penitence. Guests were to go to the chapel as soon as possible after their arrival, to retire to their respective chambers after the Salve at half-past eight in winter, and at nine in summer. All lights were to be put out at these hours. The guests must assist at the Mass of the Community and the Salve Regina, and not eat or drink in their chambers. Smoking was only allowed in the smoking-room, the gallery, or outside the house. Silence was obligatory at all meals. If guests met any of the *religieux,* especially those whom they had known in the world, they were expected to avoid them. Guests were requested to keep silence as much as possible. When they needed anything, they were to ask one of the *hôteliers,* because the *religieux,* being vowed to perpetual silence, cannot reply to those who speak. The hours of recreation were after breakfast until eight, after dinner until one-thirty, and after supper until the Salve Regina. The places of recreation were the garden, the woods, the vicinity of the monastery, the galleries, and smoking-room. No guest could go among *les emplois* without express permission; and they were not expected to sing in chapel unless admitted to the choir; in that event, they must observe the same ceremonies as the *religieux.*

By the time Winchester had mastered these rules, Brother Anselm, the monk in charge of the hostelry (he had received a dispensation to enable him to speak), came in and signified that supper was ready. He seemed rather surprised that Winchester had already used all the water in the small jug. A moment later Fraser emerged from the next cell with a guilty and subdued air as of one going to execution, and silently followed Winchester down the long passage—a passage strongly suggestive of a jail.

The refectory was a long, narrow, barely furnished room with an inscription on one wall, "On est prié de garder le silence." Sitting at the table were half a dozen Catholic priests, and one or two guests whose miscellaneous attire made it impossible to guess their avocations. They were all busily engaged in eating their frugal suppers, and took not the slightest notice of Winchester and Fraser.

Fraser, who had evidently been there before, slid into his wooden chair with great alacrity, and a lay Brother, clad in a heavy brown woolen garment, immediately began to wait upon him. Most of the priests had good appetites, though Winchester, as he gazed round, became conscious that there was very little to eat. The tablecloth, too, was not as clean as it might have been, the knives and forks were of the most primitive description, whilst the serviettes were first

cousins to the little towel on his washstand, and seemed to be equally antique.

The meal itself consisted of a limited supply of tinned salmon, tough white bread, manufactured by the monks themselves, some red and white wine, and a little cheese which smelt very strongly. On the whole, there was food enough for a hungry man, though not of the most appetizing description; for the bread was sour, and the tinned salmon failed to go round. There was something pathetic, too, in the sunken cheeks and pale face of the lay Brother who waited on the guests with the noiseless celerity of a ghost. He seemed to be mutely conscious of the scantiness of the meal, and did his best to make up for it by pouring out huge tumblers of coarse red wine—a beverage which had the combined flavor of tar, soap, and molasses. Some of the priests sipped an acid cider as if it commanded their tolerance but not their love.

Supper lasted about a quarter of an hour, and was partaken of with depressing speed. No one spoke. When the priests had finished eating they got up, said a prayer, bowed to Winchester and Fraser, and walked out of the refectory. The room itself boasted of little furniture save the long table, a few chairs, and a crucifix. From mere force of example, Winchester and Fraser soon found themselves pushing aside their plates and following the others into the open air. Once

there, it seemed as if a weight had been lifted from their hearts. The storm had passed, and every green leaf glistened with dewy drops as a herd of a hundred cows came trooping into the monastery yard preceded by a magnificent bull which slowly led the way to a huge barn. A little further on half a dozen lay Brothers were busily engaged in the cheese factory, weighing the milk brought in by the neighboring farmers, who were charged a trifling percentage for having it converted into cheese. The farmers did not speak, but took their empty cans, and drove slowly away as if any appearance of haste would be indecorous in the vicinity of the monastery.

When the cows had disappeared within the barn, a dozen fine horses came out of the stables, drank their fill at the troughs, and galloped off to the pastures as if invigorated by the storm. Hard by the stables the noisy grunting of swine of all sizes broke the stillness. Beyond the piggeries, a road led up the side of the hill, and Fraser and Winchester passed through huge fields of onions, asparagus beds, lettuces, tomatoes, and other vegetables for which there was a demand in the nearest town. Thousands of fruit trees of all sizes grew in every direction, and the extensive vineyards gave promise of a heavy crop. It was a marvel to Winchester that such fine grapes should produce so bad a wine; but Fraser explained that the monks were very poor and had to

resort to the most primitive methods to manufacture their wine. When they could not afford to employ experts for any particular thing, they achieved results by the patient process of experimenting until success crowned their efforts.

As they strolled around the farm, every now and again a white-robed Brother passed them with a grave inclination of the head, or an abstracted look which showed his thoughts to be elsewhere. Winchester caught himself gazing at these white-robed figures from time to time as if one of them might be his son; but, to his great disappointment, they were all middle-aged or old men. Some had their eyes continually on the ground, others gazed heavenward, and stumbled as they gazed. Some were bent and feeble, whilst a few walked with a certain vigor. No one hurried. It seemed as if rapid motion conflicted with their theories of life. After all, when every day was the same, it seemed rather unnecessary to be in a hurry.

At eight o'clock, when Winchester and Fraser returned from their walk, although some of the guests still lingered on the balcony, not a lay Brother or a Trappist was to be seen. Winchester (he went to bed at a quarter past eight) was tired out with the emotions of the day, and, after once more reading the regulations on the wall, speedily fell asleep. It seemed to him that he had slept but a few minutes, when the harsh clangor of a bell filled the air. He hastily jumped

up, looked at his watch, and found that it was two o'clock. Fraser, who had also been aroused by the bell, put his head into the room and said that the monks were just getting up for their three-hours' devotional exercises. They always rose at two every morning and went direct to the chapel. He recommended Winchester to get to sleep again or he would soon be so hungry that he would not know what to do with himself. Breakfast was not until half-past six, added Fraser, dinner at twelve. Then he went back to bed in the adjoining cell, and Winchester once more endeavored to sleep. Every quarter of an hour another bell rang, and made slumber almost impossible.

For a time his efforts were in vain. As he pictured to himself the long rows of monks in the chapel going through their devotions, the faint swell of the distant organ made sleep still more difficult. In despair, he turned on the electric light, took a book out of his bag, and began to read. This at length had the desired effect, and, drowsily getting into bed, he fell asleep.

At six o'clock the next morning, the indefatigable Fraser put his head in Winchester's cell and mournfully confessed that he was exceedingly hungry; that, owing to the repeated ringing of the monastery bell, he had not been able to sleep at all; and that he could eat half a dozen breakfasts. He warned Winchester that, though he might find the food uninviting, it would be better for him to

eat all he could, as there was no possibility of getting anything more until twelve o'clock.

All this talk about food rather annoyed Winchester. He wanted to think of his son, and not be continually taking stock of his own physical needs. It seemed to him that Fraser was more material than himself; but when he entered the refectory, and its request for silence confronted him with the cheerless passivity of the previous evening, he began to feel that Fraser was right, and that it would be wise to make as big a meal as possible, if he wished to hold out until dinner time.

The meal consisted of bread, butter, cheese, some unripe raspberries and milk, and bean coffee. In the whole course of his somewhat checkered career Winchester had never tasted bean coffee, and it was only when he reflected that the poor monks were giving him of their best that he was able to swallow the unsavory decoction. His own qualms, however, did not prevent him from being filled with admiration for the way in which Fraser stolidly ate half an enormous loaf and washed down the rank cheese with bean coffee as if he had been accustomed to that nauseating beverage every day of his life and rather enjoyed it than otherwise.

The meal was a little more protracted than that of the previous evening owing to the unspoken feeling on all sides that it behooved everyone to

take thought for the slowly passing hours. The same patient, hollow-eyed lay Brother waited on them, and, if possible, looked more wistful than before. There were dark rings under his eyes which told of constant vigils; he had the crushed air of one who has fled from an overwhelming sorrow and is not sure that it will not meet him at every corner. Winchester, though not naturally sympathetic, could not help feeling strongly drawn towards this silent abstraction as he flitted round the table. The place began to influence Winchester's imagination. Several times he caught himself pointing to things that he wanted rather than break the silence by asking for them. Fraser, following his example, did the same, and it was not until the two men reached the balcony where smoking was allowed that Fraser asked Winchester how he was getting on. For his own part, said Fraser, he already felt exceedingly ethereal, but could manage to hold out for a day or two longer if Winchester found any difficulty in arranging matters with the Abbot. Should the worst come to the worst, they could make some excuse and walk down to the village of Mahota and have a meal there. Still, if such a proceeding reached the ears of the good Fathers, it would pain them exceedingly, and he did not wish to resort to such an extreme step unless it became absolutely necessary.

Winchester, touched by Fraser's thoughtful

consideration for the Fathers, willingly agreed to do his best to hold out against the cravings of hunger as long as possible, and began to smoke. He argued that if he smoked a good deal, tobacco would allay his pangs and still the carnal longing for food of which he was more strongly conscious than Fraser himself.

At that moment dove-eyed Brother Anselm came up to ask if they would care to go over the monastery. He added that he would be free for a brief time after dinner, and could then show them all that they wished to see. Most of the monks and lay Brothers were now working in the fields, and would not return until dinner time. He looked significantly at Winchester as if understanding the reasons which had brought him to Mahota. Probably the boy was at work in the fields with the other monks, and had not yet been told of his father's arrival. Winchester, tortured by remorse, tried to put himself in the boy's place, and imagine all he would say to a father who had so shamefully deserted him. But the effort was futile. He did not know what the youth was like, and abandoned the attempt in despair. Probably the Abbot wished him to see his son, and, if he were disappointed with him, leave the lad in the peaceful seclusion of Mahota. But, then, the Abbot did not know of Winchester's determination to repair, as far as possible, all the injury which his neglect had brought on the boy.

In this dilemma he was forced to fall back on the contents of his bag and attempt to read in order to beguile the slowly passing hours; but he could not rivet his attention on anything, and restlessly paced up and down the long balcony which overlooked the valley. It seemed to him that the morning would never come to an end.

CHAPTER IV

FATHER AND SON

WINCHESTER, after vainly endeavoring to overcome his restlessness, spent the rest of the morning in wondering what would happen when he met his son. On the other hand, Fraser, who was somewhat of a philosopher and did not worry over things, wandered about exploring the piggeries with almost professional interest, and helping the tame monastery rabbits to escape into the woods. These amiable although uninteresting rodents, of all colors, were confined in spacious circular inclosures by means of a board fence four feet high. It amused Fraser (he found the time hang somewhat heavily on his hands) to slant a board from the inside against the fence, and watch an occasional rabbit, pluckier than the rest, run up this improvised ladder, in order to survey a new world before plunging into it. It occurred to Fraser that Winchester's son would probably do the same thing if only someone provided a sufficiently alluring board and encouraged him to make the attempt. On the other hand, the boy had been so long at the monastery that it was his world. To

take away this poor little human rabbit from it was a piece of wanton cruelty; there were so many ravenous stoats and weasels waiting outside to suck the blood directly it made the fatal plunge. The noise of the world, too, would confuse so innocent a victim, the greater part of whose life had been spent in prayer, work, silent intercession for the souls of others. This silence became such a habit that, after a certain time, it grew to be second nature and rendered speech painful. Indeed, if a novice broke his vow of silence more than four times during his novitiate, he was liable to be sent away from the monastery in disgrace. The only means of communication which the monks had with one another, unless by special dispensation, was by a sort of sign language; and even that was not used until it became absolutely necessary.

Fraser kept away from the interior of the monastery as much as possible, for the simple reason that, although a philosopher at intervals, he was also an imaginative man whose imagination threatened one day to nullify all the effects of his legal training and make a monk of him. The monastic life appealed to him strenuously. There was something fine, something original, in leaving the world before being compelled to do so by that peremptory summons which comes to all men. Besides, there was a certain mental and moral superiority in such an attitude. It had always

seemed to Fraser that a deathbed repentance, a renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world solely because the renunciation could no longer be put off, was rather a paltry, cowardly affair, a cheating of even-handed justice, a shirking of payment for liabilities incurred. On the other hand, the good monks had reduced life to its simplest form—the denial of the flesh for the ultimate glorification of the spirit. It did not appear to trouble them that the world must speedily come to an end if everyone followed their example; it was their vocation to intercede for its sins, and, by means of the intercession, this mortifying of their own flesh, this relinquishment of everything which makes life sweet and worth living to the ordinary man, to obtain pardon for the multitude of sinners who gave no heed to their own spiritual necessities.

That the outside world went on its own joyous, pagan way, living and working, loving and wooing, without a thought of, or care for, these saintly visionaries of La Trappe, was as nothing, or even less than nothing, in the estimation of the good monks. To the outer world, the mere mention of death is repugnant. There is something terrifying, sorrowful, repellent, in the bare suggestion; but to the anchorite who has familiarized himself with the King of Terrors, he is a friend instead of an enemy. From the Trappist point of view, death is merely an incident which has no

other significance than the ending of an appointed task. There was no escape from it, and no wish to escape. Every monk of the monastery spent a certain time in the burial ground attached to Mahota, in order that he might realize what death really meant. There were already thirty graves in the little garden; and the thirty-first was partially dug. When a monk felt that he was beginning to fear death, that it had qualms for him, he took a spade and dug his own grave—that grave to which, coffinless, he would be carried one day, clad in his customary monkish habit, and surrounded by the companions who had been his consciences and exemplars for so many years. Did not the very bell toll every quarter of an hour as a reminder of the passage of time? No; there was no terror in death for the monk of La Trappe; practically, he was already dead. For others, the sweet delights of home and wife and child—for him, the knotted scourge, the solitude of midnight prayer, the silence of living death; for others, the revelry of the wine cup and laughter of boon companions, the lusts of the flesh—for him, a scanty draught of cold water, the crude discomfort of vegetable food, a constant watch lest he should offend against the canons of his order; for others, the love of women, the dance, the mimic pleasures of the stage—for him, the mournful watch, perpetual, penitential prayer, a kneeling before the crucified Christ in agonized suppli-

cation that the sins of the world might pass away.

What terror could death have for such as these? Was it not rather a relief, a mitigation of the pain of living, with cowl drawn over sightless eyes, to lie beneath the earth heaped upon the fleshless form; to wake no more to the heat of the sun; to fear not the song of bird lest it should contain some devilish lure; to know that the flesh could no longer offend; that the struggle was over: that the anguished phantom of manhood had at last accomplished the crucifixion of all its passions, hopes, senses, fears, loves, hates, and had gone to its reward—that reward which could not fail after years of days and nights wherein day was night, and night was day, wherein nothing broke the regular routine of work, intercession, prayer—prayer, intercession, work; wherein every minute had its appointed task, and machine-like regularity crushed all individuality out of the monk, and made him as much a machine as a Chinese praying wheel set in motion with every coming dawn?

Fraser awoke from his reverie with a start, as the sun shone through the trees on Brother Anselm's white-robed form. He hastily knocked down the rabbit bridge which he had made to the outer world, and awaited the good Brother's approach. At the sound of slow footsteps, the rabbit which had escaped through Fraser's instrumentality came running out of the under-

growth towards Brother Anselm, who gently took it up in his arms, and replaced it within the inclosure. "You see," he said, as Fraser watched him with an air of cynical amusement, "you see, even when anything escapes from us into the outer world, it always comes back again of its own free will."

"To be eaten?" asked Fraser. "You repay his confidence in you by fattening him up for the market! Poor bunny! Do you think he would come back if he knew what fate had in store for him? Wouldn't he have a wild, free frisk round and take his chances, rather than return to certain slaughter? By the way, Brother Anselm, how would you like to go into the world again? It has just occurred to me that you may experience an occasional desire to get out of here. Isn't that so?"

Brother Anselm smiled seraphically and shook his head.

But Fraser (he was in an interrogative mood) did not feel inclined to be put off with mere signs. "How old are you, Brother Anselm?"

"Thirty years, as the world counts."

"You look older. I am thirty, but I'm twice as young as you are. And how long was your novitiate?"

"Seven years."

"Seven years! Then you were only twenty-three when you renounced the world?"

"'You see, even when anything escapes from us into the outer world, it always comes back again of its own free will.'"

"Yes; I was only twenty-three."

"A mere boy!"

"A mere boy," smilingly echoed the monk.

"And the world, my poor fellow—what did you know of it?"

"I knew enough of it to be aware that one day there was much joy, and——" He hesitated.

"And?"

"The next day there was always the pain—always the pain; and the pain was so much greater than the joy."

"Ah, then, there must have been a woman in the case?" Fraser said, with sudden pity. "When one suffers like that, there is always a woman in the case." He felt ashamed of his curiosity. Why had he raked up the ashes of so simple a past!

Brother Anselm's answering smile was that of a little child which has never known sin.

"Yes; there was a woman." His lips moved in silent prayer.

"There was a woman?"

"There was a woman; God took her; it was best."

"And you never——" Fraser stopped in amazement, for the shutters of silence closed over the monk's gentle countenance: it became absolutely blank—a surface of waxen ivory whereon naught was written.

"Forgive me!" Fraser realized, with swift

compunction, that he had led Brother Anselm into a violation of his vows. "My curiosity outran my discretion. I did not mean to——"

"Your friend awaits us," said Brother Anselm. "Let us join him. Afterwards I will accuse myself of my sin and perform penance."

Fraser followed him. "But it was my fault, Brother Anselm, not yours. I led you into it. You sin, Brother Anselm! You!"

"Oh, yes, we are only human after all. Though we give up the world, traces of it sometimes linger with us in spite of ourselves."

"But what kind of sin?" persisted Fraser, his curiosity again getting the better of his desire to hold his tongue.

"Oh, sometimes, if I have been working in the fields and am very thirsty; the fruit is so beautiful!" Brother Anselm hung his head aghast at the enormity of past transgression.

"What then?"

"I take a fruit, perhaps."

"And?"

"It is a fearful sin until I confess it and do penance: the longer confession is delayed, the greater the sin. If another monk sees me committing a sin, it is his duty to accuse me. We meet for that purpose at stated intervals and to accuse ourselves."

"What happens? Isn't it rather humiliating?"

"Oh, no, not when you have disciplined your-

self to become accustomed to it. We prostrate ourselves, confess before the Abbot and our fellow-monks, and our penance is appointed us. Sometimes it is to recite a psalm with our foreheads in the dust; sometimes, if we have been stealing fruit, when anyone else is eating in the refectory we go down on our knees to those who are having a good meal and beg for a trifle to eat; then, perhaps, someone will give us a potato or a lettuce, and we must crawl all round the refectory before we can obtain enough to stay our hunger. It is our custom to have a heavy meal of vegetables in the middle of the day, and just a little food at morn and eve. My last sin—" he thought for a moment —" was that, in speaking about some needful matter (you see, I have a perpetual dispensation to speak), I said 'my scapulary," and a Brother accused me of my sin."

" What sin could there be in so harmless a statement as that? It was your scapulary, wasn't it? "

" No, it was not. I should have said 'our scapulary.' Individually we have nothing; our clothes even are the property of the Order."

" And your penance? "

" I prostrated myself on the floor and said the fiftieth psalm. It was very thoughtless of me to have made so grievous a mistake."

They were walking slowly towards the monastery. " But how is it that you are allowed to talk to me, Brother Anselm? Why should you

have a dispensation to speak? You are a Trappist."

"Because I speak English, and look after our guests. It is a great distraction from thinking of the next world; but it is necessary that someone should do it, so I volunteered, although I would rather have remained silent."

"And how long do you intend to stop here?"

"Until I die." Brother Anselm spoke in a simple, matter-of-fact tone, as if he might die at any moment, and was not afraid of death. "I have made a vow never to leave here." He looked about with an air which implied what a vast world was comprised in the monastery grounds, and that it would be very unreasonable for anyone to wish for a wider range of action.

Fraser's curiosity was still insatiable. "And the lay Brothers? Are they allowed to speak during their novitiate?"

"If they speak more than four times without permission, they are sent away. Our youngest lay Brother has been here for seven years, and has never spoken unless authorized to do so. He is now nineteen; some day he will become a Trappist."

"What will happen then?"

"He is quite willing to take the final vows, but has not yet been permitted. He is still very young."

"Very young! I should think he is!" Fraser

started as Winchester came towards them. "But if he wants to go into the world again before he becomes a Trappist?"

"He will not want to go." Brother Anselm smiled pityingly.

"But if the feeling came over him that he must see things for himself?"

"Then he will surely go; but he will come back again. Oh, yes, he will come back. Little Brother Colombe could not live without us."

As Winchester joined them, Brother Anselm led the way into the burial ground, and pointed to the monastery wall, whereon was written a record of all the monks who lay in the little garden. The resting-places of the monks were ranged in two rows, and a third row began with a half-finished grave.

Brother Anselm took up a mattock and threw out some earth from the grave. Moved by a sudden impulse, Winchester did the same. His eyes dilated; he seemed to see himself lying at the bottom of the grave, clad in Trappist robes. As the vision passed he put his hand to his heart with a pained gesture, drew back with a shiver, and looked at the sweet flowers which grew up to the very edges of the graves.

"Don't be morbid," said Fraser hastily; "that's what comes of pandering to death. Just listen to the bees buzzing round the sunflowers; they haven't taken a vow of silence, Brother Anselm, and in

spite of their noise, perhaps because of it, they produce a good deal of honey."

But Brother Anselm was already leading the way to the refectory, the haunt of perpetual silence, and Fraser did not press him for an answer. It was a lofty room, with plain deal floor and whitewashed walls. Two long tables ran down the center, and each monk had his allotted stool and place. In front of him were carefully ranged a coarse napkin, a deal spoon, and a glass. The monk's name was carved on a piece of wood which lay upon the napkin. Big tin pitchers of water were placed at regular intervals down the tables, and on the wall was the usual printed notice, "On est prié de garder le silence."

As Winchester strolled idly round he suddenly noticed Fraser point with outstretched finger to the bottom of the table, where, in all likelihood, the youngest lay Brother was accustomed to sit. On the usual little piece of wood was printed in neat characters, "Brother Colombe."

Winchester's heart leaped within him. "It is my son," he said to himself, and followed Brother Anselm upstairs to the dormitory.

The dormitory reminded Winchester of a stable where the name of each horse is printed over his stall, only this long room, with its whitewashed walls and plain deal floor, had two rows of cells neatly partitioned off from one another. There were no doors, but a piece of cheap cotton hung in

front of the entrance to each cell, and the furniture, if furniture it could be called, was precisely the same. There was a simple mattress on a couple of deal boards. The monks slept with their clothes on, and, five minutes after the ringing of the bell at two in the morning, were always to be found in their respective chapel stalls; to be late was a fault which necessitated prompt penance. Here and there some monk with artistic tendencies had painted a little picture of the Virgin Mary or one of the Saints; but the paintings were few and far between. The Abbot's cell was exactly the same as the others, even simpler if possible, and with a scantier mattress. Here again, at the end of the row in the lay Brothers' dormitory, was a cell bearing the name of "Brother Colombe." Winchester began to look for it everywhere. When he stood inside the cell, suspicion became a certainty, for pinned to the wall was a little picture of a female saint with a halo round her brow, and, looking out at Winchester from beneath the shelter of the halo, appeared the highly etherealized and spiritualized face of—Lady Geste! The child must have dimly remembered the mother who had so relentlessly sacrificed him to her social ambitions. That he should depict her as a saint was an unconscious sarcasm which, had she known it, would have appealed to Lady Geste, who was not without a certain sense of humor, even when it was at her own expense. Otherwise, she would never have

declined to marry Winchester. It was his seriousness which prevented her from loving him. Seriousness and dullness were synonymous terms with Lady Geste; and she did not like dull people.

"A portrait?" asked Winchester, as Brother Anselm entered the cell and looked at the picture with rapt delight and devotion.

Brother Anselm stepped out of the cell in pained silence. This heretic did not even recognize a painting of the Blessed Virgin! But perpetual silence reigned also in the dormitory, and he could not explain. Such ignorance was to be pitied, not blamed. He must be prayed for, and perhaps the Blessed Virgin would come to his aid.

Winchester looked again in order to be certain that he was not mistaken. No, there was the customary air of alert curiosity in her beautiful eyes. She seemed amused to find herself in such a place, and her aspect was the reverse of devotional. He came to the conclusion that her nose was slightly out of drawing. Perhaps this accounted for her irreverent air.

By the time Winchester had recovered from the shock of seeing Lady Geste's classic lineaments in a Trappist monastery, Brother Anselm was leading the way through a quaint garden so secluded that even the bees had not been able to discover its whereabouts. As they crossed the garden they could see white-robed figures in the cloisters above them, framed in a setting of Virginia creeper. The

green leaves emphasized the whiteness of some of their faces; others were robust and sunburned, as if the body had thriven at the expense of the monk's mentality. When Brother Anselm reached the open door of the cloisters he turned towards them and laid his finger on his lips with a significant gesture. It was evident that here, even in the recreation hour, silence still obtained, and that all intruders were expected to conform to the rules.

Winchester and Fraser, following Brother Anselm through the cloisters, suddenly retreated from the twentieth century into mediæval times, for here were grave monks, noiselessly moving about with slow, deliberate footsteps, or kneeling by the closed windows as they laboriously copied small figures from illuminated missals. A few, but these were very few, read great black-letter volumes, their lips moving in silent prayer the while. Only one or two sat, their hands crossed on their breasts, gazing into space and seeing visions of the Paradise to which they were so swiftly hastening. Every monk, even in this crowd of his fellows, seemed to move in an atmosphere of complete isolation. There were good faces, wicked faces, morose faces, faces of dreamers, faces of men who suffered perpetual martyrdom, faces of angelic purity and sweetness, faces which were simply foolish, faces which had seen hell, faces which were still seeing it, faces which had no expression at all. But over every face, whatever its underlying ex-

pression, was the mask of silence—that mask which shut it off from the world and set an indelible stamp upon it. The monks' sandaled feet made no sound upon the stone floor; the very air was saturated with silence. Winchester seemed to see ghostly aërial hands press down upon the monks in the cold, subdued light which filtered through the windows. He made an involuntary gesture to press back the ghostly hands, as if he would fain free from thraldom these phantoms who had once been living men, but were now, to him, already dead—the immaterial presentments of some great grief, some sleepless sorrow which refused to be stilled. A sudden awe, a grieved compassion, fell upon him. He wanted to touch these quiet monks, plead with them, call them back to the world, tell them of the marvelous things they had missed, show them the God who had created them—the God whose holiness was in the hearts of little children, of lily maids. But their unseeing eyes passed him coldly by; they made no sign to welcome him; he was dead; they alone lived. He half lifted his hands in mute entreaty, then followed Fraser and Brother Anselm, a weight upon his heart, a leaden torpor in his feet. Would nothing stir them, move them, bring them back to life? Would nothing quicken their leaden hearts, make them long for sunshine, the babble of babes, the clasp of human hands? An hysterical desire seized him to profane this silence irrevo-

cably, to drive away the unseen shades hovering over these cowled forms, to put to rout this cold formalism which crushed their hearts and souls. Oh, if he could only laugh, do something, hurt himself even, make them feel that he needed their help to guide his footsteps in the way of peace and kill the hatred of a woman he had once loved, the hatred which was gnawing his life away!

But the words froze on his lips; the pall of silence fell upon him also. He folded his arms, and, with bowed head, followed the others through the long cloisters, until they turned a corner and disappeared.

Had they done it intentionally? Why did they wish to leave him with these cold shades? He hurried on, then paused irresolutely.

Before one of the Stations of the Cross, the voluminous folds of his brown robe falling around him, his eyes fixed on the agonized form of the Redeemer of the World, knelt a beautiful youth. His lips moved in prayer, but no sound issued from them; there was no sadness in his eyes. He was as one untouched by the sin and sorrow of the world. The thin, pure face, the large violet eyes filled with liquid light, the long hands clasped in prayer, the ring of golden hair around his head, the sensitive lips, the sweet though firmly molded chin, the slight yet muscular form drooping beneath the heavy brown robe—all these still further accentuated the lay Brother's youth.

Winchester gazed, afraid to move, afraid to speak, afraid of he knew not what. In this brief moment of frenzied recognition, the scales fell momentarily from his eyes: life had still something to offer him besides revenge. A half-stifled sob choked him, he wanted to take the lad in his arms, implore forgiveness for the wrong he had done him, bring him forth into the world and forget the past. But God had been before him, had set a stamp upon the figure kneeling at the feet of the suffering Saviour, had robbed him of his son.

A change suddenly came over the face of the kneeling lay Brother. He moved uneasily, conscious of Winchester's mesmeric glance, rose, staggered against the wall, stretched out both hands as if to thrust someone back.

As Winchester moved a step forward, the lad's long, thin hands quivered appealingly towards him in puzzled recognition, his face worked.

The words froze on Winchester's lips, his outstretched hand fell to his side. The lad's eyes filled with light, he tottered forward, then drew his cowl over his head, and turned his face to the wall.

"My son! My son!" The words came in a hollow whisper from Winchester's parched lips. He seemed to hear someone else speaking them. "Don't you know me? My son! My son!"

The lad's hands stretched upward against the wall, a sob shook his sinewy frame, but he made no

sign. When he turned round, full of penitence at having thus strayed from heaven to earth, he was alone.

A hand was placed upon his shoulder, and the Abbot silently beckoned the lay Brother to follow him.

Brother Colombe folded his hands on his heart, and, with bowed head, silently glided after the Abbot.

CHAPTER V

INTO THE WORLD

WHEN they reached the Abbot's cell, Brother Colombe looked up at his spiritual superior with wistful reverence, for that silent ecclesiastic in his cold, reserved, impersonal sort of way—that way which discourages all human affection, and yet is sometimes unable to hide it—had been more than a father to him. Once or twice, in the course of his long novitiate, the Abbot had given Brother Colombe permission to talk to him on subjects entirely apart from educational topics. It was then that the two had grown more closely together, for the Abbot, in spite of his austerity, was not without human kindliness. At such times, rare as they were, he conveyed to Brother Colombe that, in so far as he was permitted to indulge in earthly affections, he looked upon him as a son whom it was his pleasure as well as his duty to bring up in the right path. But these rare intervals had of late years become rarer still, and it was evident that the Abbot had purposely discontinued them lest they should become too dear and wean him from the heaven on which his austere eyes were fixed.

As he knelt at the Abbot's feet, the young monk

regarded him with a questioning air. "The blow has fallen. You wish me to go into the world again, Father? Must I leave you?" He gazed round the Abbot's little room as if it comprised the universe and he could not imagine anything beyond it.

The Abbot laid one knotted hand upon the youth's head. It was an innocent face on which he gazed—the face of a boy who had lived strenuous nights and days in pursuit of an ideal—a boy who had never known happiness as it is commonly understood; and he sighed as he thought how quickly it would alter under the corroding influence of the world, how lines would mar its placid surface, how the innocence would fade away from it. "This stranger is your father, my son, and ever since you came to us that dark and stormy night, I have taught you that if the voice of God called you back to the world ere it was too late—ere you had taken the final vows—it would be your duty to leave us. Is it not a duty laid upon you by your heavenly Father to save the soul of this earthly one?"

"But the perishing souls of all the world, Father?"

"This man is your father; he has an imperative claim on your prayers. If you knew the meaning of earthly ties, my son, you would understand me, but you have been weaned from them so young that you do not understand, and do not see the duty which lies before you."

"Alas! Is that so grievous a fault, Father?"

"No, my son. God will give you light."

"And must I abandon intercession for the souls of others—that duty which has been mine ever since I can remember anything?"

"By no means, my son. Only this is the duty nearest to your hand, and must take precedence of the others. God, in his goodness, has brought your father in search of you to our gates. We give you up to him in exchange for yourself. One day you must bring him back to us."

"I will try, my Father." He paused for a moment, his innocent eyes lifted to the Abbot's face. "But I had renounced the world and all its works. When you took me to your arms, starving, weary, without a friend, chilled nearly to death in the bitter weather, I vowed never to leave you, never to leave Mahota."

"I absolve you from that vow, my son. A cruel injustice has been done your father by those who took you away from him, and that injustice must be remedied. It is better that you should go. If you were to neglect this opportunity, you might afterwards regret it when your regret would be useless. I would fain keep you with us, but you must go, my son. Yes, you must go." The Abbot looked down upon him pityingly. "Say that you have refused the world, rather than that you have renounced it. How can we renounce

that which we have never known?" His tone became harsh, and the young man felt the implied rebuke. He did not know that the Abbot wanted him to stay, but was also sacrificing himself on the altar of duty.

For some years past, Brother Colombe's mode of life had eliminated all initiative, all individuality; he had become a puppet, and the virtues of passive obedience had been drilled into him until it seemed a sin to wish to do anything of his own accord. Now, however, he was suddenly called upon to think for himself, to judge for himself; and it became increasingly difficult. His spiritual superiors generally decided things for him in a way which did not admit of appeal. Hence, he hesitated. Besides, he could not understand the conflicting emotions which agitated him. It was so long since he had known human ties that to feel that he had a father—a father who had come over seas all the way from England to claim him—gave him a sense of indefinable happiness. But the solitude of monastic life had eaten into his soul; it had become second nature with him; and he felt grieved to abandon thus suddenly the habits and customs of years. He feared to begin the new life lest it should prove a snare and a stumbling-block in the path of righteousness.

With an intuition born of long experience in the study of men, the Abbot divined his thoughts. "I have always had my misgivings," he said re-

luctantly, "whether it was right to admit one so young to the novitiate of our Order; you could not possibly realize at that early age the responsibilities which you were taking upon yourself. But you came to us crying to be sheltered from the world which had treated you so harshly, and we took you in. Now, my doubts are answered. God has decided that it is your destiny to rejoin your fellows. Perhaps you will one day return to us after you have made trial of the world's joys and temptations. You will instinctively discover how hollow and perishable are these so-called human affections, how enduring and unfailing the love of God to his creatures who serve him faithfully within the peaceful shelter of our monastery walls. Our doors will never be closed against you, my son. This man your father is of the world, worldly; but he has been influenced by his affection for you in coming to seek you out, and, under pledge of secrecy, has confided your history to me. Be assured that it is of an unusual character, and that I agree with him in thinking it right that the details should never be revealed to you. He blames himself much, but is more than anxious to atone for the past."

The young man looked up dreamily at the Abbot, and spoke slowly, as one to whom speech has long been unfamiliar. "I know nothing of the world, Father—less than nothing; save that it is something beyond and around us from which we

cannot escape. I do not even comprehend what it means. All I know is that I go out from among you, from the peace and quietude of Mahota, to the great, noisy, restless universe. Sometimes, when I have been on the hills here, I have heard the shouting of the farmers below as they gathered in their harvest, the laughter of women and children, and once I met a woman and turned my eyes to the ground; but it seemed to me that she was very fair and sweet to look upon. Why did she say 'Poor boy! Poor boy!' so sadly and gently as if she pitied me, my Father, when I was full of pity for her?"

"To lure you into worldly thoughts," said the good Abbot hastily. "It was well that you turned your eyes to the ground. When you meet a woman, my son, it is wiser to turn your eyes to the ground."

"But if I go into the world, Father, I cannot always turn my eyes to the ground."

"You can always turn them heavenward," said the Abbot, with some asperity. "A woman's eyes are not likely to follow you there!" He seemed to commune with some memory of his own past, and spoke as one having authority.

"But is it not safer to remain here, Father, where there are none of these creatures so perilous to the soul's salvation?"

"We should always face, and overcome, temptation, my son, rather than flee from it."

"Then I will look temptation in the face, and strive to overcome it, Father."

"That is well, my son."

The lad remained silent a moment. "But this woman's pity has pained me, my Father. I felt alone. In my dreams, I have since heard her gentle voice. Before, I had always dreamed of the Saints."

The Abbot scarcely repressed a smile at Brother Colombe's naïve confession. "It is unprofitable to pursue so unseemly a subject further, my son. The Creator, in his wisdom, has thought fit to afflict the world with these feminine snares, and since the creation of the world they have filled it with misery and pain. Oftentimes they know not the evil they do. God has not given them the power of understanding themselves. They are as little children who cry for everything they desire; and for a man to be desired of a woman is the ultimate trial which, should he overcome it, crowns him with righteousness."

He took some papers from the table and handed them to the lad. "When you leave here, you will no longer be known as Brother Colombe, but as Harry Winchester. You will obey your father in all things that your conscience permits, and will endeavor to bring his footsteps into the paths of peace. After you have mixed with the busy world, this life of ours will seem little more to you than a fantastic dream. It will slowly fade from your

remembrance, as the world lays hold upon you, and you will gradually forget it. But it will not be without its power to influence you in your dealings with men and women—especially the latter, my son; and they, alas! are everywhere. To cope successfully with the wiles of the world, you must be acquainted with them." With this parting advice, the Abbot blessed Brother Colombe and hurriedly withdrew. The interview was becoming painful to pupil and teacher alike.

He had scarcely gone out before Winchester hurried into the room, full of eagerness to see what manner of lad it was who called him father. There was an awkward pause as Brother Colombe rose from his knees. He seemed to be forever putting behind him the life of the monk, and to be preparing to enter the world with a sweet and serious gravity. In Brother Colombe's thin features, Winchester could trace little resemblance to his own; the lad looked far more like his mother, and there was a certain air of fragility and delicacy about him which was probably due to the austerities of the life he had been leading for the past few years.

Winchester, looking at his son, felt that six months' careful diet and contact with the world would make an enormous difference in his physical appearance; the proper development of Brother Colombe's muscles would produce a young athlete; the material was there. He would also lose this

absurd habit of standing with folded hands and downcast eyes. He tried to look ahead and reconstruct Brother Colombe as he intended him to be six months later, and failed signally. "Shake hands, Harry," he said quietly. "The time has now come for you to bury Brother Colombe; you are my son, Harry Winchester, and an English gentleman. I am going to take you into the world and procure for you a certain amount of happiness if it is in my power to do so. You must leave here with me as soon as possible, and we shall soon get to know one another."

"But I am very happy here," said the lad with his quaint, slow speech, as if his tongue felt for the sound of every vowel. "I am very happy here; and I know nothing of the world; it overwhelms me."

Winchester began to think that his task would be more difficult than he had imagined; but in his joy at finding his son—in discovering that there were latent possibilities of affection in him—he was determined that nothing on his part should be wanting to make the lad happy. He again put out his hand. "Shake hands, English fashion. You have been so long in this place that it will take some time to make you realize the change in your life. Your mother tongue will soon come back to you after you have once overcome this habit of silence."

Harry put out his hand as if he did not quite

know what was about to happen to it. At his father's hearty grip, a faint color stole into his cheek, but he still remained standing as if in the presence of a superior. Only by a tremendous effort of will did he prevent his hands from muffling themselves in his voluminous sleeves.

"Why don't you sit down?" asked Winchester, carelessly dropping into the Abbot's chair, with an irreverence which filled his son with dismay.

"It is not the custom," faltered Brother Colombe, then remembered that he was Brother Colombe no longer. "If I have your permission," he said timidly.

"Permission, lad! You needn't ask permission to sit down in your father's presence. But there, I suppose it will take you some time to get out of these habits. Can you be ready to come away from here by to-morrow morning? Get your traps together, and all that sort of thing? I don't suppose you have very much to pack."

The lad looked down upon his brown robe. "I have nothing. Even this does not belong to me," he said in matter-of-fact tones, as if such poverty did not require comment. "It is against the rules of the Order for individuals to own anything."

"Oh, yes; I had forgotten. We'll soon alter all that." Winchester critically surveyed the ring of clipped hair which disfigured his son's head. "The first thing will be to get you out of this and let your hair grow again." He eyed the brown

robe with distaste. "You'll have to leave off wearing this, you know."

"If it pleases you, my father," said the lad regretfully. This promise to doff the monastic habit was a visible surrender of himself to the world, and he had not yet realized what a bulwark his father was to become between him and it.

"Of course, of course," said Winchester. "You won't know yourself in a few days' time." His cheeriness almost surprised himself. He had looked for tragedy, and here he was talking about clothes to the lad in a most matter-of-fact way. "It will be a little uphill work for you at first. You have lived here so long that everything must, of necessity, be fearfully strange and awkward to you. But the Abbot tells me that you have been well educated and are very quick at adapting yourself to circumstances. He says that you are the quickest pupil he has ever had, and that your power of assimilating knowledge is something wonderful."

The boy smiled, for the Abbot's praise was new to him. "He never told me so," he said slowly, rolling his tongue as if at a loss to hit upon the exact words wherewith to express his meaning; "but have I not talked more than enough for one day—my father? It is so strange to me—this voluble conversation."

Winchester was amused and—touched. "Good word that, 'voluble.' I suppose you have talked

more in five minutes, Harry, than in the last five years?"

Harry bowed his head with his old habit of submission. He would also have folded his hands in the loose sleeves of his gown had he not noticed the easy way in which Winchester's hung down over the arms of the Abbot's chair. If he were to become a denizen of the world, he must copy his father as closely as possible; and so he sat back in his own chair with a curious attempt at imitating the other's attitude—an attempt which the long brown robe rendered extremely incongruous, and yet it was rather touching; it was so automatic and yet full of a manifest desire to please.

Winchester was secretly delighted at this ready acquiescence in his views. It seemed to him that, underlying the discipline of years, there was a certain amount of latent originality in his son which would one day find an outlet as soon as the opportunity offered. The lad's sweetness of disposition and ready adaptability augured well for the future.

"If," said Harry, with the air of a tremendous talker, "I find a difficulty in following worldly customs, you will teach me, my father?"

"Of course I will," said Winchester heartily. "I am not unreasonable enough to expect you to drop into everything right off after all these years of seclusion." He laughed. "It would be like bringing an owl into the daylight; not for a

moment that I mean to imply that you are an owl, but you have lived so long in this monastic twilight that you will, naturally, blink a little at first when you come forth into the full light of the sun. Now let me see about a rig-out for you. Fraser has, very obligingly, gone down to Montreal to get you some things."

"Things?" echoed the young man questioningly.

"Yes, things. I don't suppose you have had many opportunities to cultivate a taste for clothes. Habits don't seem to change much in this part of the world. You must have some new clothes, of course."

"I have this," said the lad, affectionately regarding his rusty brown gown. "At least, I think Father Hieronymus will allow me to take it away with me. I could perhaps earn something to pay for another dress. It will cost you so much money to buy my clothes. I can dig very well, and milk cows, and plant potatoes."

"Dig! Milk cows! Plant potatoes! No, no, lad. Don't worry about that. When you get to England, you shall have all the clothes you want. In the meantime, we must see what Montreal can do for you. I have settled all necessary details with Father Hieronymus. He suggested that perhaps you might like to take this—" Winchester touched the brown robe somewhat gingerly—"with you, as a memorial, and I agreed that you

should do so. Of course, you can't wear it in the world—not in our world. When I've put you in the hands of a decent tailor, you won't know yourself. In the meantime, let your hair grow properly instead of having it clipped off all round in that absurd fashion. You'd look all the better if you were to wear a mustache," he added critically. "Your face is a bit girlish from the effects of vegetarian diet."

"Girlish, my father! What is that? Do girls eat nothing but vegetables?"

This simplicity amused Winchester. "Oh, you'll soon find that out. We shall have to teach you how to eat a beefsteak."

"But is it not wicked thus to pamper the flesh?" hesitated the young man. "We generally dine on green onions and lentil soup. Is it not wrong to eat flesh?"

"It is so common a form of wickedness in the world that it has ceased to count," said Winchester lightly; "and I don't think it would do you much harm to adopt it on your own account; but we shall have to begin by degrees. You're as muscular as a wild cat, but not quite as supple. I've ordered ham and eggs for supper to-night, as an easy transition from vegetables. To think that you've lived all these years near those fine porkers and have never yet tasted ham! In consideration of the circumstances, the Abbot has consented to improve our diet. We mustn't overload your stomach all

at once with animal food after it has been accustomed to frugal vegetables."

Harry drew a little nearer to him. "I think you are going to be very kind to me, my father." He smiled at Winchester as if his fears were already vanquished by the other's affectionate manner.

"Kind to you! Of course I'm going to be kind to you." He noticed the lad's heavy shoes. "Why, those are enough to cripple you for life. Never mind. We'll soon change all this sort of thing, and get you something lighter and more comfortable."

The lad looked again at the father who had sprung out of the unknown in so wonderful a way, this stranger who had loosened the foundations of the earth in a few hours. It seemed impossible to realize all at once how radical and searching was the approaching change in his life. Still, he was firmly convinced that he had a mission to go forth into the world, and that it was his duty to take care of this father who had so suddenly claimed him. As he gazed at the tired, handsome face, with its dark shadows under the eyes, opposite to him in the Abbot's chair, he felt a sudden thrill of affection for Winchester. This man loved him already, and yet, with a certain timidity fostered by the seclusion of his life, the lad shrank from leaving the monastery. He had quitted it but once in the last five years, and his brief tour in the neigh-

boring villages, in charge of a companion who was permitted to speak to the *habitants*, had aroused in him, greatly to his own indignation and surprise, certain feelings which he could not understand. Everyone in the great world seemed happy enough, in spite of the misery which was indubitably their allotted portion. If the people in those picturesque little villages were all sinners, how was it they could be so happy? How could they laugh and jest with one another, and play their violins so tunefully when the lights were low and the evening shadows fell across the sward, as the women sat in their little picturesque porches, and waited for the rising of the moon? He had kept his doubts to himself and had wrestled with them again and again. Now, they revived with fresh force; and he felt that he would have an opportunity of solving the most difficult problem of his young life—a problem which had already caused him numerous penitential prayers.

Winchester, although not seeming to do so, watched him closely. "You see, Harry, you have had all this iron discipline for a good many years, and you can't throw off the effects in a moment. I did not know you were here or I would have taken you away before; but there were circumstances I cannot explain which caused me to lose sight of you. Now, you will take your proper place in society as my son."

"Society! What is that, my father?"

"What is it? Oh, a herding together of different incongruities for the sake of talking about their neighbors. They bore one another, but there is no getting out of it. Don't say 'my father,' there's a good lad. Better say 'father.' And understand that I wish never to hear your mother's name."

"Mother!" the young man echoed, in his curious imitative way. "Mother! My mother!"

"Yes; she is dead," said Winchester, lying hastily. "The subject is a painful one, and I don't like to talk about it." His face clouded over for a moment. "I am sure you will respect my wishes."

The young man bowed his head from force of habit; he also put back his hands to his long sleeves; then remembered that he must not do so, and pulled them out again. He was tired and confused with all this talking, but resolved to adopt the habits of the world as speedily as possible lest he should occasion remark and make his father uncomfortable.

"Don't you feel any curiosity as to where we are going?" asked Winchester. "Of course, the Abbot has told you that we leave here to-morrow. Fraser comes back to-night with the things for you."

"I am dazed." The young man put his hand to his head with a gesture of bewilderment. "It is only a few hours since I was looking forward to taking the final vows, and now the whole plan of my life is changed."

"Believe me," said Winchester earnestly, "in a little while, you will thank me for changing it. All I want you to realize is that I am actuated by the sincerest motives for your happiness. I want to make you happy while I can, and to give you some idea how to use your money when you succeed me. You will believe that, won't you?" Then he again shook hands with the lad and left him to recover from the effects of this bewildering interview.

After Winchester had gone, the young man remained lost in a reverie. He had risen with bowed head and folded hands, as is usual when a superior is about to leave the room. When he was alone again, he sat down, his head in his hands, wondering that all the restraints had been removed from his life. It had never before occurred to him that his existence had been utterly colorless. It was as if a prison door had been suddenly opened, and that the mere fact of opening it revealed it as a prison. Owing to the habits of so many years, his steps had become adapted to the size of the prison, and he could not tell which way to turn. Besides, he knew nothing of this great world from which his father had so suddenly appeared. He must go into it, speak to people, and—a flush suffused his cheeks—were there not women in the world? In the monastery it had been possible successfully to evade them. They were a temptation—something which it was the first duty of a monk to

avoid. Now, he would see any number of women and be thrown into daily contact with them. How to reconcile this with his former professions as a monk, he did not know, but comforted himself by reflecting that the Abbot knew and that the Abbot, although full of solemn warning, had raised no objection. Still, the change in his career was so bewildering that he could not realize it at once. Then he started up with a shudder of dismay. The bell was ringing for evening service, and he was not in his accustomed place. That would mean disgrace—a penance! His accustomed place! Had he any accustomed place? Was he not leaving his place in order to enter another sphere altogether, to go he knew not whither, to do he knew not what?

With hurried steps, he hastened to the chapel. As he reached the door, however, a lay Brother's hand touched him on the arm and drew him up into the gallery above the chapel to the places allotted to visitors. Then the monk withdrew, clad in the sandals of silence, and the poor boy remained standing. He felt the deprivation keenly. Only that morning, as he occupied his accustomed stall, he had looked forward to a life of solitude, intercession, hard work. Now, he was to abandon this cherished dream at a moment's notice and go forth into the world. Already, he was immeasurably separated from his companions; there was a broad gulf between them which could never be bridged

over. They stood, as usual, in their stalls below, going through the service in their wonted impassive manner. Nothing had happened to them; nothing ever would happen, until they died and were carried from their cells to the little burial ground in the garden. When he looked at his own stall, he noticed, with an additional pang, that it was empty. Never again would he occupy it, unless he returned to the monastery to take the final vows. For the first time, in his gentle heart there stirred a feeling almost of resentment that he should be thus cut off from the privileges of the Order. Surely, the Abbot might have allowed him to occupy his stall for the last time, to take a mute farewell of those companions whom he had learned to love: grim Aloysius, gray-haired Bernard, the gentle Hyacinth! Had he not committed more sins in the course of this one day than in the whole period of his novitiate? Pained, bewildered, overcome by the sorrow which gnawed at his heart, he hid his face in his hands, dropped on his knees, and prayed to be preserved from the temptations of that world which he was so unwillingly about to enter.

After the service was over "Brother Colombe" was confronted with fresh perplexities, for Fraser, finding the lad wandering disconsolately about the main corridor, took him to Winchester's room, where several boxes were already unpacked. There was also a bewildering variety of clothes

lying on the floor and bed. There were socks and shirts and undergarments, tweed suits and ties, and, worst of all, a worldly straw hat with a blue ribbon round it. More suggestive than anything else was a big bath of warm water in one corner of the room. "Brother Colombe" had never indulged in the luxury of a warm bath, and the prospect of having one was not wholly unalluring.

"Don't be frightened," said Winchester, noticing the boy's look of dismay. "I'll just show you how these things ought to be worn; then we'll clear out whilst you have a tub. As a matter of sentiment, I should begin by having a tub, if I were you." He looked somewhat ruefully at the stained gown and clumsy shoes which his son wore, and turned away. It appeared to Harry that "tub" was English for "bath."

He suddenly became aware of a lurking love for color. His little portraits of saints had always been distinguished by somewhat daring hues; and now, as he looked at the things provided for him, he was conscious of a certain pleasure. It must be sinful to look forward with anticipatory delight to the wearing of these things. But he was so accustomed to his heavy gown that he could not understand how he was to be sufficiently clad in such flimsy-looking garments. Apparently, this was an insurmountable drawback.

"Oh, you'll be all right in a little while," said Winchester cheerily. "Here is your shirt all

ready for you. You see, the studs go in this way. When you've had your tub, I'll come in and rig you out. I don't think Fraser has forgotten anything. He had to guess at your boots; perhaps they are a trifle big for you; but after these—" he glanced at the heavy leather boots which Harry was beginning to take off—" they'll seem comparatively comfortable. Once we get back to England, we'll soon straighten out all these trifles." Then Fraser and Winchester withdrew and left him to make the " tub's " acquaintance.

Harry found that the dreamy sensation induced by the warmth of the water was very pleasant. When he somewhat reluctantly emerged from this unfamiliar " tub," he felt curiously happy. His heavy robe lay in a heap on the floor, and a few minutes later he was laboriously endeavoring to struggle into a suit of tweeds. Winchester's returning step made him temporarily abandon the struggle. " These are braces; they fasten this way," said Winchester, delicately refraining from inquiring into the nature of a Trappist's underclothing. He also handed his son a collar. " You put it on in this way, and tie a sailor's knot like this." But the lad could not tie a sailor's knot, so Winchester stood behind him and showed him how to do it. As soon as Harry had grasped the method of tying the knot, Winchester undid it and made him do it for himself.

" You'll find the collar a bit galling. We all do

at first," said Winchester, as Harry put on his new coat, and presented the anomaly of a modern youth who wore his hair cut in the fashion peculiar to Trappists. "You aren't quite comfortable anywhere, eh? Things pinch a bit in unexpected places?"

Harry somewhat ruefully admitted that, after the freedom of his Trappist robe, his new clothes seemed rather uncomfortable. The pressure was so unevenly distributed.

"Oh, you'll soon get over that. Now for your boots. Yes, they fit as decently as can be expected, considering that they are ready-made. You'll find a pair of gloves in the pocket of your coat, but you needn't bother about them just yet. They'd worry you more than the clothes. Here's your hat; I'm afraid that will worry you after being used to a hood. Now, as a concession to the peculiar circumstances of the case, the Abbot has given us a room in which to feed, and so we sha'n't be bothered with all those other people. He thinks you might be embarrassed if you were to have a parting meal in the refectory; the visitors would be fancying all sorts of things. Now, they won't know anything about it, as we leave here to-morrow. Hold your head up, and square your shoulders a bit. You'd be all the better for a little drill. It isn't natural for a youngster to droop his head and shoulders like that. You don't do yourself justice." He sat down on the bed and looked

Harry carefully over from top to toe. "Your figure's good enough for anything, now it isn't hidden in that brown robe. I expect everything is beastly uncomfortable! Never mind, my boy. Just try to worry through, although it is a bit rough on you. In a day or two you'll be astonished at your progress. It's like teaching a child to walk; it's bound to tumble about a bit at first. You can't help feeling pathetic when you bruise yourself."

Then Fraser came up, and they all went into the adjoining room which had been hastily made ready for their accommodation. To his own intense astonishment, Harry found that he could eat ham and eggs with pleasure. At first, he pretended to do so in order to please his father; but their novel flavor to one who had been so long a vegetarian, encouraged him to new efforts, and he had a fresh helping, although the lay Brother who was waiting on them could hardly conceal his astonishment at ex-Brother Colombe's rapid fall from grace. But, then, the lay Brother was not in a position to experiment on the ham.

After supper was over, Winchester and Fraser smoked contemplatively, and talked occasionally in order that Harry might become familiarized with the human voice. Then, seeing that he could scarcely keep his eyes open, said good-night and left him to his own devices. The lad fell asleep almost directly his tired head touched the pillow,

for the events of the day had exhausted him, both physically and mentally.

At two o'clock the next morning Harry was awakened by the bell calling the Brethren to prayer. The Abbot stood at his bedside, and, in response to his questioning look, pointed to the robe which the lad had cast off on the previous evening. In accordance with his usual custom, Harry had gone to bed in his clothes—it had not occurred to Winchester to explain to him that Englishmen do not do so—and, quickly slipping the brown robe over his modern tweed suit, he followed the Abbot into the chapel. When the Abbot led him to his customary stall, he understood that this was the final privilege accorded to him before his departure in order the more thoroughly to impress upon him that, although he was going forth into the world, he must not necessarily forget Mahota. Lost in a maze of mingled bewilderment and regret, he found himself mechanically repeating the responses, and, as soon as the long services were over, the Abbot solemnly blessed Harry and bade him depart in peace. This was his final farewell to the monastery waif whom he had temporarily rescued from the storms of the world.

When the Abbot slowly walked away, the lad carefully packed his monastic robe in one of the portmanteaus which Fraser had brought for him. With a sigh he fastened the key round his neck, and, feeling how impossible it was to sleep, sat

down by the window in order to watch the rosy-fingered dawn.

As he sat there he already began to feel like a fish out of water, and would have given something to be freed from the confinement of his new clothes. After some meditation it suddenly occurred to him to take off the tweed suit; it annoyed him in every limb. Released from its galling thraldom, he crept into bed with a delicious sense of freedom and irresponsibility. Whilst he was still stretching his cramped limbs and keenly enjoying the unwonted luxury of a flock mattress, he forgot about the dawn coming and fell asleep. When he awoke at six o'clock, his father sat by the bedside, waiting for him to get up. This time there was a tub of cold water in the corner of the room, and Winchester gently explained that, after the manner of other worldlings, he had better take a tub every morning.

Harry meekly acquiesced, although such a proceeding appeared to him rather unnecessary. The bracing effect of the cold water made him exceedingly hungry, and he was again given ham and eggs, which seemed to be the most worldly dish to be found in the monastery. After breakfast he escorted his father round the farm, patted the patient Percherons for the last time, and tried not to see that the Brethren passed him by with averted eyes. Although they had never even spoken to him, he had always felt conscious of a strong bond of affection and sympathy for them. Now that

the bond was about to be broken, they who had maintained the better part would not even recognize this fallen brother. Their coldness hurt the lad's gentle heart, but with it came the knowledge of injustice. Then he blamed himself for this feeling and endeavored to forget that the monastery would soon know him no more, although every step round the old familiar sheds was an added pang.

Winchester, watching the lad carefully, saw exactly what was passing in his mind. The knowledge rather frightened him; there remained so much to be done before the lad was fit to enter the world. Would he himself have the necessary firmness and patience to make the experiment easy? He hoped so, and, linking his arm in his son's, strolled back to where the horse and buggy awaited them at the monastery door. He endeavored to lessen the pain of parting by telling the lad what was in store for him when they should reach England.

The Abbot was nowhere to be seen, but smiling Brother Anselm, as usual, stood at the monastery door, waiting to receive the guests' parting alms. He looked Harry affectionately in the face, placed one hand upon his shoulder, and murmured a few gentle words of farewell. They conveyed the impression that Harry was the victim of circumstances, and would soon return to Mahota. With bursting heart, the lad wrung Brother Anselm's

horny hand, climbed into the buggy, and was slowly driven away, a stray monk, here and there, glancing up at the sound of the departing wheels.

As they reached the crest of the hill opposite the monastery, Winchester laid a gentle hand upon his son's shoulder and stopped the horse. "Look up, Harry," he said. "Look up and see the last of Mahota. The sun is shining and it is at its best."

Harry looked up for one brief moment, then once more buried his face in his hands, and the mercurial lad who drove the thin steed wondered at the curious way in which the young Englishman wore his hair. "Mahota fine place?" he asked, vigorously flagellating the unhappy animal. "Tink I go dere myself some days when I wants to learn to hold de tongue. *En avant, paresseux!*" he added; and once more drove onward the weary horse, which turned its head with an expressive glance at the occupants of the buggy as much as to say they were indeed foolish to leave the peaceful seclusion of a haven like Mahota.

The boat was waiting for them at the village pier, and, in company with half a dozen black-cassocked priests, they started for Montreal.

CHAPTER VI

GOING HOME

THEY reached Montreal in safety, and looked out for a hack to take their luggage down to the *Lake Onontic*. When Fraser objected to the charge of two dollars, the driver expressed his wrath in language more forcible than polite. Harry stared at his father in some bewilderment; in his worldly experience it seemed to him much too large a sum for such a trifling service: for two dollars one could feed four hundred monks a whole day.

"You deal with the scoundrel, Harry," said Winchester, shrugging his shoulders, and turning aside. "It is a dollar too much. Knock him down if he is impertinent." He was secretly anxious to see of what metal his son was made. There were no aggressive hack-drivers at Mahota, and it was evident that the lad had no precedents to guide him.

It was all very well for Winchester to tell Harry to knock down the hackman, who was big, strong, and exceedingly muscular. Fraser looked on rather anxiously, and got ready to intervene should the hackman prove unmanageable, and decline to

be knocked down. What would the lad do with a meat-fed man over six feet high and broad in proportion? It would be a case of meat *versus* vegetables, and he had not much faith in the efficacy of vegetables. Still, he saw Winchester's object in leaving Harry to his own resources, and was quite prepared to take a hand should circumstances necessitate his intervention.

"My father thinks it is a dollar too much," said Harry, in his low, measured tones, looking at the hackman. "Will you not kindly reconsider your determination? We should all esteem it a favor if you were able to do so. You see, it is not right to ask so much for such a trifling service."

The hackman was about to say something idiomatically rude in reply, but the singular sweetness of the lad's face temporarily robbed him of his customary fluency. "You don't get this luggage until you pay another dollar," he said roughly, ashamed that he should have hesitated before the stripling who now confronted him.

"But you cannot have more than a dollar," said Harry firmly. "We do not think it right."

"Oh, don't you! We'll soon see about that!" And the hackman, hardening his heart, gave the lad a rough push, which nearly sent him into the gutter.

Harry looked appealingly round at his father and Fraser. At first, owing to his old habit of monastic submission, he was inclined to suffer

patiently this affront. Then, he noticed the disappointed expression on his friends' faces, and, walking up to the hackman, laid one delicate yet strong hand on his shoulder. "I am a stranger to the world, and I have never met anyone like you before. Please apologize for your rudeness, and I will forgive you. You disappoint me very much. If all hackmen are like you, I do not want to meet any more."

"What!" ejaculated the hackman; and added language warm enough in its picturesque opprobrium to set the steamer on fire.

"It is not right," said Harry, "to use such language. You deserve a penance, but I leave you to your own conscience. Father Hieronymus would be much harder with you. Here is your dollar." He spoke so slowly that the hackman had again time to run his eye over him.

The hackman threw the dollar on the ground, and indulged in more frantic phraseology, when Harry picked it up again.

"Once more, here is your dollar," said the lad. "I have tried in vain to make you see your extortionate wickedness. If you do not take it, I fear that, for your own good, I shall have to be severe with you."

The hackman indulged in language, if possible, more fluent and forcible than before, and it is scarcely necessary to add that it was again unfit for publication.

"We have endured this shameless one long enough, my father," said Harry. "God calls me to punish him." With surprising strength for one so young, he seized the hackman by the collar of his coat, and hurled him with a crash into the gutter. Then he folded his hands, and looked heavenward as if entreating pardon for this necessary violence.

The hackman was so taken by surprise that he sat up and looked round in mute amazement. Even his power of colloquial invective failed him at this critical juncture. He stared at the mild-eyed stripling, and wondered where the slim body concealed so much muscular power.

"I am afraid I have hurt you," said Harry commiseratingly, as he extended a helping hand to the hackman and raised him to his feet; "but you see how necessary it was to convince you, do you not? Let me brush some of the dust off you."

But his temporary paralysis having passed, the floodgates of speech were opened, and the hackman explained at great length his views as to the necessity of Harry's proceedings, and the deceitfulness of his appearance generally. He further stated that the lad was a sanguinary priest, and ought to go back to his church.

Harry looked at him with sad reproach. "Brother Hieronymus would be grieved to hear you swear like that. How can you make your peace with God if, even now, you are not sorry!

If I were you, I would help to get the things on board. We can talk about your feelings afterwards, when you are penitent."

Something in Harry's mildly determined expression convinced the hackman that he had better do as the lad suggested. To his own great astonishment he found himself actively assisting in taking the luggage on board the steamer, which lay at her moorings ready to start. He had not worked so hard for weeks.

Fraser and Winchester rapidly exchanged glances. "He'll do," said Fraser. "I had no idea there was so much grit in the lad. Or that you could get so much muscle out of vegetables. How his pluck must have been kept under all these years, and how quickly it has come to the surface again! Yesterday, a mild-faced monk, wearing himself out with penitential prayers for sins he hadn't committed; to-day, a twentieth-century stripling who knocks hackmen about as if they were ninepins. He'll do right enough. You ought to let him join the army."

"Looks a bit ashamed of himself as if he thought he'd done something sinful," said Winchester, "but he floored that hackman all the same. For a moment, I had an uneasy consciousness that the lad was a coward, and wished I had left him in the monastery."

"I never thought that of him," said Fraser, "and after to-day I never shall be likely to think

it. You had both better get on board. What on earth is the boy doing now? That fellow will think him mad."

Harry had taken the unwilling hackman into a corner (the hackman did not want to go, but it seemed safer to humor this mysterious youth, who pushed him down with one hand, and helped him up again with the other), and was earnestly expostulating with him on the foolishness of his conduct. Fraser and Winchester heard him explaining that the hackman could never hope to go to heaven, if on earth he charged two dollars where he ought to charge one; and the hackman also fluently retorting that he had not the slightest ambition to go to heaven, provided he could get two dollars any time he wanted it. But after a time Harry's persuasive accents seemed to touch his stony heart, and he reluctantly declared that he would be a little more careful in future, and not overcharge more than fifty per cent. Then Harry affectionately shook hands with him, and told the hackman he would remember him in his prayers. The hackman was about to say that he did not want to be remembered in anyone's adjectived prayers, but the dread of being told what Father Hieronymus would think of him choked his profane utterance and the growl died down in his throat. He paused for a moment to look after the lad as he went up the gangway of the *Lake Onontic,* and scratched his head reflectively.

"Mad!" he said to himself. "Mad! That's what's the matter with him. I ought to have known from his eye as it wasn't safe to meddle with him. Fancy a boy like that wanting to pray for me! Me! Why there ain't a grown man in Montreal could tackle such a contract, and not lose money on it."

He stood looking after them with a stupefied expression as the great steamer slowly glided down the St. Lawrence, and Fraser waved an excitable farewell to father and son. When the steamer was fairly off, the passengers began to make overtures to one another. There seemed to be a general feeling among them that they would have to spend the next nine or ten days together, and that the best thing they could do was to become as friendly as possible. They began by lending one another deck-chairs and the usual paper-covered novels, together with infallible remedies for seasickness which were more fatal than the malady itself. Most of them seemed to have realized the great truth that at sea a human being becomes merely a stomach. Some carried string bags filled with lemons, others had paper parcels of gingerbread nuts or bottles of ginger ale, whilst one good-natured old lady went about with a tumbler of salt water, entreating other old ladies to shut their eyes, hold their noses, and get it down with a gulp. "It is in the nature of a hemetic," she explained in a thin, piping voice, and the people who rashly drank

the salt water soon became authorities on the subject.

There was a list of passengers hanging up in the cabin, for curious travelers to study with a view to finding out who was who. For the rest of the day, they all consulted it in turns, and blushed guiltily when caught in the act.

An elderly lady—Miss Smithson—had just come from Nova Scotia. On the strength of being the great-granddaughter of a celebrated English writer, she was prepared to pose as a literary character if she could only find a sufficient number of willing disciples. She had a large, strong face, and was essentially good-natured, in spite of her literary pretensions. Next to her at the long table sat Dr. and Mrs. Canton. The doctor was a well-known Toronto surgeon, and surveyed his fellow passengers with that acute professional glance which at once locates any symptoms of disease. Apparently, the result was satisfactory, for his face cleared, and he whispered to his wife that his services were not likely to be required. Next to this couple sat a trim-looking dragoon major of about forty-five. There was a twinkle in his eye which betokened latent humor. As he surveyed the food on his plate, and barked urgent remonstrances in military terms to the steward who waited on him, it was evident that he was living up to the twinkle. Next to the major were the usual English tourists, a Mr. and Mrs. De

Kingsley Smith, who were bringing home with them a pretty niece from Canada in order to initiate her into the ways of English society. The girl (she was only nineteen, with raven hair and black eyes) audibly declared to the major that Canadian manners and customs were quite good enough for her, and that she was going to convert English society instead of being converted by it; whereupon the major earnestly advised her to convert English food also. He said that it needed a little more attention than it usually received.

On the other side of Miss De Kingsley Smith sat a young Montreal lawyer named Cameron, who was evidently smitten with her appearance and inclined to be attentive. He had a somewhat supercilious air, and thin, delicate features. He asked the steward for food in a manner which suggested that the steward was a very important client who must not be hanged. When anyone made a statement, his first impulse seemed to be to get up and object to it; but when he remembered that he was not in court, he went on with his lunch and said nothing. On the other side of the young lawyer sat a dark, handsome, rather weather-beaten woman of about forty. A little flutter of excitement went round the Captain's table, when Miss Smithson audibly announced that she was a "real, live countess." Miss Smithson seemed to think that the fact of her being alive made the countess so

much more acceptable from the social and hygienic point of view. Not that titles counted for anything in Canada, added Miss Smithson, with stern impartiality. Still, in her secluded life in Nova Scotia she had never before met with a countess, and she intended to make the most of the occasion, provided the countess reciprocated her advances. The countess was apparently prepared to be amiable in a lofty, condescending way, and cast sidelong glances at the young lawyer, who took his food at random and thought that he was seeing life.

It was also evident that Miss De Kingsley Smith was already fascinated by the countess, for she stared at her in the adoring way which young girls sometimes show for women double their age. When the countess was not occupied in looking at the young man, she cast glances of friendly approval at the girl: she was evidently accustomed to admiration from all quarters. On the other side of the countess was Harry's place; next to him sat his father; and after them came the usual miscellaneous collection of passengers who have no individual characteristics of any kind—the sort of people who are seasick *en masse,* and spend the most of the voyage in describing their symptoms with great wealth of detail and mutual enjoyment. Although they were not yet out of the Gulf, they audibly expressed their intention of becoming ill at the earliest possible moment; it seemed so much

better to get it over—they did not explain whether they were referring to the seasickness or to their lunch. With a view to getting rid of their lugubrious visages and of hastening the inevitable cataclysm, Dr. Canton cordially advised them to eat as much as possible. This, he said, would precipitate matters, and the sooner they were precipitated, the sooner would the passengers begin to enjoy the voyage. Full of delight at this advice, which chimed in exactly with their own views, they all had copious helpings of lobster salad and mayonnaise, and looked forward to the worst with a certain resignation born of that present enjoyment which nothing could destroy.

Harry's observant faculties, so long dormant, were rapidly coming into play. He noticed how people used their knives and forks, the sorts of glasses from which they drank various kinds of wine, and the way in which they spoke to the steward. It seemed to him that the stewards had all the humility of the lay Brothers, for they bustled about and did their best to please everybody even when they were bullied. They all agreed, however, in first bringing everything to the Countess Dega, who sat next to Harry, and who, though not apparently taking any notice of him, did her best to fascinate the lad; his eyes seemed to please her: they wore so different an expression from the orbs into which she generally gazed.

Harry, though he did not know why, began to

enjoy sitting next to the countess, and did not feel at all afraid of the play she made with her fine, dark eyes. In a day or two he quite forgot the Abbot's injunction to cast his eyes on the ground when meeting a woman. At first he fixed them on his plate, but as this prevented him from seeing all that was going on around him, he soon relinquished the practice. In addition, he was so engrossed by the newness of the social atmosphere that he did not notice when the steward took away his plate with the food untouched. (The countess did, and accepted the fact as an involuntary tribute to herself.) It was only when Winchester reminded him that lunch was nearly over that he began to eat; but it seemed as if every morsel of food choked him. He wondered how the majority of passengers could eat so unconcernedly, and wanted to get away on deck, to be alone with the free winds of heaven, instead of sitting in a stuffy saloon in the overwhelming presence of the countess. There was no doubt that she was overwhelming; but why was he overwhelmed, why could he not eat? Although only a few days had elapsed since his departure from the monastery, he was already developing a tremendous appetite, and no longer went about with downcast eyes and folded hands. There was so much in the blue sky above him to attract his attention, that it seemed as if he could never gaze at it sufficiently. When he was not looking at the blue sky he gazed at the

restless, sullen sea. The black eyes of the countess were open and attractive also; the innocent and inexperienced lad seemed to see heaven in them already. When she first spoke to him (he would never have had the courage to make any advances to her) he felt sure that she was a celestial marvel, and wondered greatly that everyone else, with the exception of Miss Smithson, did not seem to think very much of her.

One day, as the countess rose from the table, she dropped her handkerchief, and Winchester surveyed this little timeworn comedy with keen amusement, that comedy which is so stale to the jaded onlooker, so fresh at least to one of the actors in it. What would Harry do? Would he pick up the handkerchief and restore it to its owner with a pretty little speech, or bashfully affect to ignore it altogether? Winchester knew very well what he would have done had he been in Harry's shoes.

For a minute or more Harry seemed undecided as to what he ought to do; but as a steward was rushing towards the handkerchief, he hastily seized it and, with a becoming blush, handed it to the countess, who magnetized him with her dark, eloquent eyes, and murmured a few conventional words of thanks which sent a thrill of delight through the young man.

Winchester regretted that the somewhat saturnine Fraser was not there to witness this little comedy, this rapid undoing of the good work

of Mahota. They had parted from him with great reluctance at Montreal, and he had returned to the rustic seclusion of Four Corners, first extracting a promise from Winchester to write and let him know how things were going on. He had no doubt, he said, that things would go on right enough; but it would be interesting to hear the experiences of this young novice fresh from a great monastery like Mahota. One advantage of living at Mahota was that everything was novel when leaving it. "After that hackman incident," Fraser had declared to Winchester, before setting foot on shore again, "there was no doubt that Harry would soon 'find himself', and the sooner he did so the better it would be for everyone else."

Winchester, as he sat looking at Harry and the countess, felt that the experiences were beginning already. Perhaps it was just as well that he was on the spot to regulate them a little and to see what happened. Another incident of this kind would throw Mahota still further into the background, and not have any permanent ill effects. Of course it would be useless to say anything to the lad about the countess, although Winchester had pretty accurately gauged that lady and her past. There is always an air about a woman with a past which compromises her present, and is likely to lead to complications in her future. Still, to a lad fresh from a monastery, the countess seemed an angel of light, all radiant purity and grace. Winchester

sighed as he thought of his own experience at the same age. How quickly the light had faded! Surely, Judas should have been a woman and not a man! Still, it was part of the lad's necessary experience that he should go through this sort of thing, and Winchester, remembering his own early days, and all that he had suffered from a too credulous belief in womanhood, resolved that Harry should get off as lightly as possible. He tried to put himself in the solitary lad's place, and imagine what all this new life must be to him. All this color, fragrance, perfume, this bustle, noise, and activity, must end by unsettling him a little. Of course, in time he would recover his balance; but at present there was the intoxicating charm of novelty about everything—a charm which was rapidly doing away with Harry's depression at leaving the monastery. This was part of the training which Winchester intended for him, and he was glad to see that the scheme worked well enough for all practical purposes. When the lad met his unknown mother (Winchester fully intended that they should meet) his experiences with the countess would help him to gauge the character of the unnatural woman who had rid herself of him at the cost of a fifty-pound note.

It began to be whispered among the passengers that there was something unusual about this young Mr. Winchester; that he was not as other young men, but was gifted with a remarkably serious turn

of mind which enabled him to regard things far more circumspectly than most lads of the same age. There were so many people on board who were not of a serious turn of mind, that young Mr. Winchester became a somewhat prominent individual. There was an ingenuous and timid sweetness about him which appealed very strongly to the old ladies, who sought his advice in matters of conscience and asked him whether he wore flannel next to his skin. His delicious ignorance of the world also appealed to the countess with irresistible humor. She played the lad with the greatest skill, at one time rewarding him with a smile, and at another scarcely deigning to notice his existence. When she passed him by with a far-away look in her eyes, Harry felt that he wanted to go back to the monastery; but when she asked him to bring her a deck chair and told him to sit beside her, he thought no more of Mahota. The countess confided to him that she wanted sympathy. It had been her sad lot all her life to be misunderstood. Never before had she met so perfectly sympathetic a young man as himself, one so untainted, so unspotted by the world. She wished to enjoy his freshness as much as possible, to benefit by the originality of his views before they palled upon her. Nothing, added the countess, with a view to his enlightenment as to their future relations, ever endured in this world; therefore, it was the truest wisdom of two kindred souls (she was very particular to emphasize the

word "souls," so as to lend a spiritual flavor to their friendship—as a rule, her friendships were not distinguished by their spirituality) to seize the passing moment and make the most of it.

Then the countess, forgetting her spiritual theories, looked at Harry as if he were the passing moment to be seized, and the lad began to think how little the Abbot knew about women, how unjust he had been to them. But, of course, as there were no women in Mahota, the Abbot could not help himself from such misconceptions. It already seemed to the lad that to live where there were no women was to shut out light, air, perfume, flowers, the songs of birds, the glory of sunrise and sunset, everything which made life attractive. All these beautiful attributes of the world helped one to understand the sweet perfection of a beautiful woman. They did homage to her as it were, and made a fitting frame for her beauty. When he naïvely conveyed this impression to the countess, she said that although she was old enough to be his mother, she had never before heard an original thought so charmingly expressed; it helped to make all women beautiful. He must have a good deal of unconscious genius to be able to clothe his ideas in such appropriate words. Curiously enough, however, when she attempted to pump the lad as to his past history, Winchester was always at her elbow volunteering an explanation why Harry had been brought up in the seclusion of a country dis-

trict in Canada. Moreover, the countess knew instinctively that all her wiles, arts, and graces were completely thrown away on this somewhat cynical man of the world who saw through them almost as quickly as they were put into execution. For some reason of his own, he permitted this little comedy to take place, and looked on as an interested spectator. But the countess felt that should he choose to bring it to a close at any moment, he would unhesitatingly do so. In the meantime, she was grateful to Harry for giving her a momentary sense of freshness; it made her feel—and look—younger.

After passing through a region of perpetual summer, the *Lake Onontic* emerged from the Straits of Belle Isle, and immediately encountered desolate fields of drifting ice. She was surrounded by a perpetual circle of gray-green sky, gray sea—in which there was no shading, no sunlight, no blue; the vessel floated on a gray sea which seemed to be the last refuge of those to whom life had become equally gray. Phantom, snow-capped, inscrutable icebergs loomed up mysteriously from every quarter, bringing with them a sense of passionless mystery and terror, of unhasting, relentless force—force which could annihilate this little world of beings without conscious effort. The captain was so impressed by these icebergs as they majestically floated through the drift ice that he declined to go to bed at all. He cheerfully assured

the passengers that there was no danger; but his anxiety when he mounted the bridge told quite another story, and he was very careful in testing the temperature of the sea-water which was hauled up in little leather buckets by sailors stationed at each side of the ship.

Everyone, with the exception of Harry and his father, felt more or less perturbed at the appearance of these sheeted monsters of the North. Harry, however, with all the ignorance of youth, looked on icebergs and drift ice as a matter of course. People told him they were dangerous, and he took it for granted. It was the captain's business to look after icebergs and he would probably do so in the ordinary course of things. Harry, although quite unconsciously, had inherited all his father's physical bravery, whilst Winchester was so accustomed to danger in every shape and form that he never gave it a second thought. Hence, on the first night, when the ice closed round them in every direction, and people were half out of their wits with fright, Harry and his father went to bed at their usual hour, scorning to make themselves uncomfortable with life-belts or to shiver on deck prepared for the worst. They were the center of a circle of ice which was continually cracking and crashing, lifting, squeezing, groaning, against the ship's sides, and forcing her to slacken speed, whilst on the dim horizon an invading army of huge bergs came steadily on.

Harry had slept for little more than an hour when he was awakened by the steward coming into his cabin and handing him a small perfumed note. It appeared that the countess, unable to sleep, had gone up on deck. She wished him to come up also in order to share the danger with her. If they really had to die, as all these fussy passengers seemed to think was the case, it would be so much nicer to face the inevitable together; and he seemed so much better prepared for eternity than herself. If he agreed with her, perhaps he would kindly come up on deck at once before it was too late.

On receipt of this unexpected missive, the young man got up and hastily dressed, reproaching himself in the meantime for not having been more mindful of the countess' distress. It seemed to him that if she expected him, he ought to be by her side, ready to help her to face the inevitable should the worst come to the worst and the ship strike on one of these mysterious gliding mountains of ice.

But as he made his way to the countess through a crowd of clamorous, terror-stricken passengers, and found her sitting in a secluded part of the deck with an attentive steward hovering about her, coffee cup in hand, she did not seem at all alarmed, and motioned him to sit beside her with a matter-of-course air which ruffled even his sweet temper for the moment when he thought of the peremptory summons which had roused him from his slumbers.

Still, it was a new sensation for him to sit there in the moonlight, drinking coffee—the countess had insisted that he should have some, and had slyly motioned to the steward to put some liqueur into the cup—with so fair a companion, and see those ghostly bergs glide nearer and nearer, while the grinding masses of drift ice against the vessel's sides lent a certain suggestion of danger to the scene. Though the countenances of the other passengers were pallid in the moonlight, the countess had more color than usual, and told the steward to put another liqueur into her coffee. She looked at the steward with an air—though the boy did not see it—which indicated that he must not omit to put another in Harry's cup also.

When the fresh coffee came Harry drank his with great gusto, although it seemed to have a new and peculiar flavor. His palate had received so many new sensations during the first few days after leaving the monastery that it was a little overworked and blunted. Although he detected something unusual in the coffee, he did not know what it was, and was surprised at his own growing cheerfulness whilst others were distraught with fear. Under the countess' tuition, he was rapidly acquiring a certain fluency and facility of expression, and he became more fluent than usual as he told her how much he enjoyed the scene.

"Finish your coffee, child," said the countess, with a motherly air. "Nature is always improved

by, and you will enjoy it still more when viewed with, all the comforts of material accessories."

After he had gulped down the rest of his coffee, Harry again began to talk confidentially to the countess, while she, leaning back, wrapped in furs, encouraged him to confide his impressions to her. She said that it was the rarest thing possible to meet a young man with so little experience of the world who could make the little he knew go so far, and she hoped that when he landed in England he would not be spoiled. She feared, however, that she was doing her best to spoil him, although he reminded her so pleasantly of her own lost youth that she could not help it. When he expressed his thanks with an ardor mainly due to the liqueurs he had unwittingly swallowed, she languidly extended a white hand to the lad as if she expected him to kiss it and clasp it to his heart.

Harry, probably with a dim memory of his monastic training, which had confined his kissing to the Abbot's hand, did not avail himself of this opportunity, and only shook it warmly. In her heart the countess set him down as a lout; but this did not prevent her from smiling sweetly at him with the immemorial guile of false womanhood in search of momentary amusement at the expense of the other sex. She confidingly placed her hand on his arm and drew him so closely to her that he could feel her warm breath on his cheek. Did he think there was any real danger? If the ship went to

the bottom, would he do his best to save her, and if he could not save her would he take her in his arms as they sank? It was so hard and infelicitous to die when one was going to Paris to get new frocks.

There undoubtedly was danger, although the lad did not like to tell her so; for at times the moon was shut out by huge masses of cloud. In this dense darkness the groaning and grinding of the ice against the ship had an appalling intensity calculated to shake the nerve of the boldest. On all sides huge shadowy forms bore down upon them carrying certain destruction in their train. But the captain, alert, cool, confident, cheery as a cricket piping on the domestic hearth, gave orders in his customary clear tone, and the ship slowly threaded its way through huge masses of ice as dexterously as if in the broad daylight, although more than once it was touch and go with her. After an hour of relentless pursuit by these sea-phantoms the countess, feeling that Harry was engrossed in the dangers of the scene, also became silent, and leaned back in her furs with a little shiver, as if for the first time her nerves were beginning to fail. She saw, with intense chagrin, that the lad had completely forgotten her existence; that he was entirely absorbed by the weird scene, and had no thought of danger either to himself or to her. The wind whistled shrilly in the ship's scanty rigging, a few drops of rain fell, and still no one had the courage

to go below when one of these sea-wolves might crush them to atoms at a moment's notice.

The countess, even at that moment, did not relish being forgotten. As a gentle reminder of her existence, her ungloved hand stole out from the shelter of her furs and nestled in that of the young man, where it lay, warmly, tenderly, confidingly. The sensation was altogether new to Harry; although his first impulse was to withdraw his own hand from her fervent touch, he did not do so. Emboldened by his inaction, the countess again pressed it warmly and he was conscious of a thrill of delight which filled his whole being. His color came and went, he became oblivious of the falling rain, of the grayish-white shapes looming through the darkness, of the imminent destruction of the ship and everyone in it, as his whole soul soared heavenward with delight. Then, this experienced woman of the world, not content with the tumult she had produced in the lad's innocent soul, bent over his chair and suddenly pressed the audacious scarlet of her lips to his.

Harry drew back with a startled cry. The *Lake Onontic* crashed against the side of a small iceberg, shivered as if she were settling down, then righted herself and glided away from the mass of ice which had threatened her with destruction. To find a passage out the captain had steered between two icebergs, grazing the smaller one in order to escape the certain menace of the other.

Undisturbed by the shrieks of the frightened passengers, the countess maintained her self-possession when she saw that the danger was past. Then she gracefully threw herself into the young man's arms and nestled her head confidingly on his shoulder. "You will save me, Harry, dearest? I am safe with you!" She shivered artistically, and refused to release him.

The young man was about to say he knew not what, when Winchester's voice fell on his ears and brought him to his senses.

"We'll both do all that's necessary for you, countess," he said cheerily; "but it's all right—we're not in any real danger. I have just asked the captain about it, and although it was a narrow shave, he thinks we have got through the worst of the ice. We shall be in clear water in a couple of hours. Hadn't you better turn in, Harry? You're not used to this sort of thing."

For the moment the young man almost disliked his father. Then he became aware of his own childish folly and inexperience, and smiled back at him. "You are right, my father," he said slowly. "I was bewildered. It is all so different from Mahota. Good-night, countess." And he disappeared, leaving the countess and Winchester *tête-à-tête.*

A smile played round the insolent lips of the woman, as she motioned to Winchester to take Harry's vacant chair. "Why have you brought

the boy up in such delicious innocence? He almost makes one believe in goodness, ideals, chivalry, and all that sort of thing."

Winchester looked at her sardonically. "Such a belief would doubtless have the charm of novelty for you, countess."

"With your assistance, perhaps I might be able to make it last for some time," said the countess with an amused laugh. "It is a little hard on the boy. He is such a delicious fool. Do you intend him always to remain so?"

"Oh, no, not always. His education, as you see, is only just beginning, but in your capable hands, countess, it has already made vaster strides than I intended. I did not know you were going so far."

The countess bowed and drew her furs around her. "Having begun to educate the son," she said mockingly, "it would be a privilege to continue to instruct the father, only I should"—her voice became a menace and a challenge at the same time—"I should adopt different methods."

"Thanks, but my education in that way is already completed. I have no wish to begin it again. Life is too short."

"My dear Mr. Winchester, a man is never too old, or too young, to learn from—me! Sometimes, that sort of education begins again in spite of our wishes," said the countess; and there was a seductive appeal in her voice which would not have

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been lost on most men. Winchester, however, merely shrugged his shoulders, bowed politely, and assured the countess that he was infinitely indebted to her for the way in which she had opened the lad's eyes. "In future, perhaps, you will have the kindness to be a little colder to him," he said. "Such lessons as yours, like arsenic, must be administered in small doses; otherwise——"

"Otherwise?"

"They are apt to saturate the system and to become dangerous."

The countess tightened her furs with a shiver. "There are enough icebergs out there," she said, with her forefinger pointing through the darkness to the sea-wolves as they disappeared, "without meeting them in human form on the *Lake Onontic*."

"Icebergs have their uses."

"They have been known to melt."

"Sometimes. The kind of ice I mean does not melt."

"Oh, yes; but one can sometimes administer quite a pleasing little lesson just as effectually without them, or, indeed, because of them," said the countess; and glided away like a beautiful serpent.

Winchester followed her disappearance with a cold smile. "That is experience number one for the lad. Better to begin quickly, and get them over. If he is ever to marry a nice girl, as I hope he will, it is better to have an experience like this

before marriage and have done with it: it will show him that he must not trust all women. There is only one woman in this world I have ever trusted and believed in, and Harry's mother comes between us for all time. With the memory of that episode upon me, I dare not tell May Anstruther how I long for the healing balm of her love. Poor Harry! I think the countess had gone quite far enough when I arrived. He looked like an innocent doll in the painted coils of a beautiful serpent. Faugh! The woman would have transferred her attentions to me had she stayed another five minutes. No, no; my own particular form of heart disease is quite sufficient without seeking for any further complications. Now to find Master Harry and see how he takes this eye-opener. What is a poor lad to do when he falls into the hands of a woman like that! It is a moot point whether the good that good women do is sufficient to counterbalance the harm wrought by the evil ones. I've met them both, and I ought to know, but I don't. It's too late to begin one's own life over again—it always is by the time one has found out how it ought to be lived. Still, if I can make the boy happy before the shadows lengthen and I go hence, I'll do it."

He paused irresolutely and looked across the floating masses of ice to the unfathomable darkness beyond. "After all, revenge takes too much out of one. The game isn't worth the candle. Harry

shall see his mother. I will give her one more chance, suddenly let her learn his identity and trust to the awakening of her maternal instincts when she sees how handsome he is. If she treats him decently, it may help to purge her guilt towards him. But she has made us both suffer all these years, and she deserves to be punished for it. If I can punish her I will. But I am leaving the poor boy all this time without trying to find out how he takes the countess. I'm worse than she." And he hurried away in search of Harry.

CHAPTER VII

THE COUNTESS

WINCHESTER, as he went in search of Harry, was conscious of a feeling of undisguised amusement at his son's novel experience, and the quickness of its coming. Still, it was an inevitable prelude to that necessary introduction to the life for which Harry was destined after his somewhat monotonous career at Mahota. It had, indeed, casually occurred to Winchester that perhaps, when one considered the vagaries of certain phases of English society, there might possibly be a little wisdom in the Trappist point of view that it was better to avoid it. But then, from force of circumstances, a Trappist point of view was not likely to be a very liberal one. After all, those who drink beer, think beer; and, similarly, there was every probability that those who ate vegetables, thought vegetables. If he wished to strengthen his son's character, he must do so with the aid of a more liberal diet, and yet not give him more than he could swallow without a sense of undue repletion.

A feeling of compunction stole over him. Had he been sufficiently considerate towards the lad in

thus allowing him to become an object of amusement to the first worldly woman in his path since their departure from Mahota? Perhaps he had been a little too precipitate; the lad must not be hurried; it was unfair to put him through his paces at such a rate. According to the theory of averages, by the time Harry was thirty there would not be any experiences left for him to undergo: he would of necessity have exhausted them all; and a man of thirty who has no new experiences to look forward to is better dead. But he would at the same time have thrown overboard that cargo of ideals with which youth is so heavily burdened. The one bright feature in Harry's life at the monastery seemed to be that he was not handicapped by the somewhat illogical theory that all women are angels. Looking back on his own experiences, Winchester concluded that the observance of such a belief, if consistently carried out, would lead Harry into more pitfalls than if he had gone to the other extreme. On the whole, the men who made the most of the world, and got on best in it, were those who regarded women as they did the Ten Commandments—things to be recognized when met face to face, but not to be urgently sought after. The mistake made by the neophyte was to imagine that life was impossible without being explained to him from the woman's standpoint. Of course, in real life, the woman always omitted to explain herself first, and that invariably led to con-

fusion later on. In the meantime, the lad must be gradually hardened to realities, have all the silly ignorance of monastic seclusion knocked out of him, and gradually learn to appreciate the values of life.

The values of life! There was a certain flavor about the phrase which struck Winchester, and he chewed the cud of it with appetite. How would the values of life strike the lad who had just begun to live, and who, up to the present, had been absolutely without opportunities for a just comparison of them? Moved by fatherly compunction—it was true that the compunction was somewhat tardy —for this innocent victim of a worldly woman's *ennui,* Winchester determined to go in search of his son, and to find out how he was affected by this, to him, novel experience.

When Winchester went below and looked in Harry's cabin, the lad was not there. His father began to feel alarmed. Perhaps he had taken the countess' experiment far too seriously and was overwhelmed by it. That was the worst of living in a monastery; it eliminated one's sense of humor. People went into a monastery because it enabled them to take life seriously—from a distance. But perhaps this lack of humor would lead Harry into unforeseen rashness! Men who lived on vegetables must, of necessity, take a serious view of life; their digestive organs would not allow them to be frivolous.

Half laughing at his own nervousness, Winchester quietly began to search the ship, with the vague idea that the contrite lad had expiated his crime of being kissed by a sudden leap overboard. Surely, a thoroughly youthful and illogical way of throwing cold water on so perfervid an experience! Even in the midst of his hurried search, there was an amused smile on Winchester's lips as he thought of a somewhat similar situation, dating back more years than he cared to remember. It had affected him in a very different way; but then his experience had lacked the complete seclusion of monastic life —that monastic life which, doubtless, imparted a unique flavor to Harry's adventure with the countess, and gave it an altogether disproportionate value.

Just as he was growing seriously alarmed and about to give up his search in despair, he found Harry standing at the stern of the ship, looking at the rapidly receding icebergs, now mere masses of gray in the distance. From time to time the lad shivered and turned his glowing eyes to the few fitful stars which occasionally penetrated the gloom and then disappeared behind immense drifting clouds. Once Harry put his hand to his lips as if to brush away the remembrance of the countess' immodest kiss. But his hand fell irresolutely to his side, and, in the midst of his paternal amusement, Winchester felt an odd regret; the lad was so inexpressibly young to encounter such a defile-

ment. This searing kiss of the countess had come as the first touch of the world's infamies upon his virgin lips. Well, the searing touch of the world was necessary to enable the lad to understand his future environment.

Winchester's hand on the lad's shoulder caused him to start violently. "Father!"

"Dreaming, Harry? Pity you don't smoke. Try a cigarette; it will enable you to forget your recent experiences. Most things end in smoke."

"You—you saw, then?" He turned shamed eyes to the deck.

"Oh, yes; I couldn't help it. But I don't think there was anyone else about who noticed it." He was anxious to comfort the lad.

"And you were not ashamed of me? You don't want to send me back to Mahota? You're sure you're not ashamed of me?"

"Certainly not of you; you came out of it in the orthodox manner; but I was of her—in a way. And, my dear boy, how am I to get on without you if you run back to Mahota! Remember, lad, that innocence like yours is apt to tempt people to play tricks with it. It is so—conspicuous."

"It is necessary, then, to be vile? Is the world so unaccustomed to innocence, my father, that its first instinct is to destroy it?"

"It is—when it meets it in such masses, my son. You will soon find it diminish."

"Is it—is it absolutely necessary, my father?"

When the lad grew excited about anything, he invariably said "my father, a mode of speech which irritated Winchester, though this time he successfully concealed the fact.

"Absolutely necessary. At present, you see, you are too original."

"I do not understand. Why am I too original?"

"If you did understand, there would be no necessity to explain. Don't inhale the smoke too much or it will choke you. A taste for tobacco and kisses, in order to appreciate the full flavor, must come gradually."

"The smoke makes me cough, my father."

"You swallow too much of it. In the same way, you swallowed too much of the countess just now. Better get used to her gradually, and thus acquire a standard of values which may be useful to you by and by."

The lad turned away. He had unquestioning faith in Winchester, but did not understand him. Winchester smiled.

"And yet I gave you both cigarette and countess. Well, Harry, which do you prefer?"

"I—I am not accustomed to either."

"Try again. As I said just now, take them in small doses at first."

"And then?"

"You might——"

"Might?"

"Oh, well, it would be your turn to kiss the countess."

"Is it—is it always necessary to kiss countesses, my father?"

"Always Harry—countesses of that kind; it is what they are for. They expect it."

"Could not the good God have made them for something more useful?"

"If you really want my candid opinion, I don't think that the good God had much to do with the fashioning of this particular countess, Harry. Confess now, isn't the world—even on shipboard—a more interesting place than your monastery?"

"There are no women in the monastery, my father."

"Of course, that does simplify matters; but it all depends upon which way you mean me to take that. You prefer the monastery?"

"Ye-s; no; I don't know." He thought a moment. No such bewildering problem as the countess had ever before presented itself to this innocent soul blanched in a Trappist cell, thwarted in the name of God, of that God who is the Word —this soul which, if left to itself, might have become a ruminating ox, an unearthly mystic, or a gagged devil, semi-, or dimly, brained and blooded —this human mushroom with streaks of fire in him, suddenly brought out of his cellar, blinking, into the sun, to grow rapidly under its influences

(good and bad) into a creature a little ridiculous, somewhat a cause of mirth, subjectively pathetic. But the shutters of silence no longer clashed down upon hope; the stone had been rolled away from the mouth of the tomb; and the mushroom was growing more like a human being and less like a mushroom with every passing hour.

"Oh, then, you are not sure of yourself? You don't know?" Winchester repeated.

"No, I don't know. I—I have not met so many countesses as you appear to have done, my father."

"That's a fair hit, Harry; there's a good deal of original sin lurking in this particular countess, and you seem to have the knack of bringing it into the light."

"I did not mean——"

"No, I know you didn't; but it is true for all that. And so you think—there's another big iceberg over there—we've not yet got rid of them all—you think?"

"I cannot think of countesses, my father, in the neighborhood of icebergs."

Winchester laughed. "Bravo, my boy, that was epigrammatic."

"Epi——?"

"—grammatic. That is to say, you expressed an undoubted truth in a terse and novel way. Such women as the countess generally melt icebergs—of all kinds, human and otherwise."

The lad's eyes grew big with wonder. "She melted me; and I was ashamed."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"I will tell you why you were ashamed, Harry. The woman was playing a trick—experimenting with you—trying to make black marks on a white surface. She did not feel all that you felt and thought that she was feeling. That is why you are ashamed."

"But, my father, why cannot I avoid women? Then I should have no reason to be ashamed."

"Because they are sent into this world to fit us for a better, by reason of the purgatorial fires through which they make us pass. You will probably marry one some day."

"I?"

"Yes—you. For anyone who has been brought up as a Trappist, you are uncommonly susceptible to feminine influences. Because a lie approaches you in the fair form of a woman, you at once accept it as an unquestionable truth. I have enough money for you to amuse yourself by getting married some day, only, as the ordeal is generally for life, I want you to see a good number of women first, so that you will not make a greater mistake than most people usually do when they marry."

"But, my father, I do not want to marry. I should be too bewildered."

"Oh, well, of course, you needn't do it yet.

The bewilderment would soon wear off. But some day you will feel lonely; get mental and physical indigestion; feel as if you wanted sympathy and all that kind of thing; and you will go out and see a pretty girl, and fancy she is the only woman in the world for you, and bow down before her, and worship her, and cut the same pathetic figure, which every son of Adam has cut since his father first met Eve."

"And then?"

"The trouble is that there are so many 'only women in the world' in a man's life, and modern civilization does not admit of his having more than one wife at a time. When you meet the second 'only woman in the world', as you are bound to do, you will not know what to do with the first one, and you will be unhappy. So will they, if by any chance, they happen to meet."

"Then I had better not meet the first 'only woman in the world'," the lad suggested, with unconscious wisdom, for his mushroom brain was growing rapidly.

"That's true enough; but you can't help yourself. You'll have to be just like everyone else."

"Why, my father?"

"That I don't know, Harry. If you hadn't lived in a monastery you would have found out all this by easy stages for yourself. Men of the world would have taught you how to become a

man of the world also, and—which I should have regretted—to act like one. Now, you have had to make your discovery all in a heap. That is why I let you be experimented on by the countess, as a means to an end. You are blank paper at present, and the countess has been the first to write on the surface of it. All sorts of people will scribble over you, and you will have to take them as they come, although they generally come in the wrong order."

"It is all so new to me that my brain reels."

"Of course. How could it be otherwise?"

"But why must a woman come into my life at all? I have you to care for."

"Thanks, Harry. I know you think me a brute; but I am only trying to safeguard you. When you meet a really good woman, your own goodness will respond to hers. The curse of humanity is, we are so constituted that some woman—good or bad, as the case may be—is bound to come into our lives whether we like it or not. The fact has been recognized and accepted for thousands of years. In the beginning of things, according to the old Indian legend, the gods created man. Man was lonely; felt bored at living alone; so, at his request, the gods gave him a woman to wife. In a little while he ran to the gods: 'Take this woman away, I implore you, O gods! I cannot dwell in peace with her.' The gods obligingly took her. A year later the man

came again to them: 'Give me back my wife, O gods!' They gave her—without comment, after the manner of gods. He came again yet a year later: 'O gods, I repine not, though there is no living with or without her.' That is the lesson we all have to learn, Harry."

"Is that why you let the countess——?"

"Yes, Harry; that is why I did not save you from the countess. She, however, is the obvious woman to live without. Violent delights like the countess have violent ends."

"I will pray for her, my father."

"First the hackman, now the countess. I don't think I'd waste my time, Harry. Such men and women are past praying for."

"All the more reason to pray for them, my father."

"Oh, well, if you insist, I don't object."

The lad was pained and confused. He felt that he had done wrong in submitting to the countess' blandishments, and yet his father had allowed him to do wrong, had looked smilingly on. His father loved him, but——! It was a mystery. He went to bed and prayed for the countess, after giving very perfunctory attention to the hackman. God had created the countess. Surely God loved all that he had created. If the countess were not a good woman, there was all the more need to intercede for her.

She met Harry the next day as he hid him-

self in his customary lonely part of the ship, and lost no time in renewing the previous night's attack.

"You are not very polite," she pouted. "Have you been thinking of me and of how good I was to you last night? Most people think about me when I wish them to do so. They cannot help themselves."

"I could not help myself," he admitted reluctantly. "I have been seeing your face all night."

"Why did you want to help yourself? Was it unpleasant? Is my face so ugly, then?" She paused expectantly. Even a half-witted lad brought up like this one could not miss such an obvious opening.

"I prayed for you."

"You—prayed—for—me!" She laughed almost hysterically at this unexpected rejoinder. "For me? Oh, yes, you believe in God and all that sort of thing? Why pray for me, little innocent? Am I so very bad?"

"I am afraid so. I prayed that you might become good."

"You——!" The countess was furious. "You prayed for me to become good! Oh—h! This is too much!"

"Yes. My father said it would be useless to do so, but I persevered."

The countess' rage vanished; she began to laugh.

"Oh, you dear little innocent! But you have the courage of your years, for all that. Older men than you would have hesitated before undertaking so useless a task."

"Oh, no, it will not be useless," the lad confidently assured her. "God hears our prayers. Otherwise, he would not have brought me out of the monastery to pray for you. Once I prayed to God to give me a beautiful apple which hung in the monastery orchard, and, when I woke, I found it on my bed. The Abbot told me that God had commanded him to bring it me. But it is easier to pray to God in a monastery than here on the sea."

"So you come from a monastery? That accounts for a good deal. No one but a neophyte from a monastery would have the besotted courage to pray for me. You are sure you come from a monastery, and that this air of innocence is not a sham?"

"Yes, quite sure. You are the first woman who has ever kissed me. It—it hurt!"

"I!" The woman turned scarlet. "Oh, my God! I—I am the first woman whose lips have ever touched yours since you were a child! I! the first!"

"Yes, you are the first."

The woman's emotional temperament was moved. She began to weep. "Oh, there must be a God. There must be a God. Take away

my touch from his lips if you hear me, O God! Don't add this crowning infamy to the others."

"What others? Why do you weep?"

"Oh, for—for myself—and—you. Do you expect me to laugh!"

By this time the hackman was wholly forgotten; the countess' need seemed so much the more urgent of the two. The lad folded his hands and began to pray aloud. They were in his favorite place, the stern of the vessel, and secure from interruption. The countess again became hysterical. "Will it—will it be any use without the—the details?" she gasped, half-incredulous, half-willing that he should pray for her, and yet feeling supremely ridiculous.

"The what? I don't understand."

"Oh, go back to your monastery, you callow fledgeling; I don't want your prayers." But she turned with flashing eyes softened to genuine tenderness: for once in her life she had met with a new sensation. "Poor little baby! There, there! I will never kiss you again—not in that way."

She kissed him as a mother might have kissed her child, and swept furiously away in search of Winchester. "You beast!" she said, when she had found him. "You unmitigated, loathsome beast! Why didn't you stop me? Why? Why?"

Winchester was not even amused. "What's the matter?"

"Why did you let me try to drag that boy into the mud?"

"I don't intend to leave him in the mud," he said curtly; "but it is necessary that he should know what that particular kind of mud is; and I thought you could show him better than most people."

"I'd like to kill you. Your own son, too!"

"It isn't necessary; and it might be awkward—for you."

"I have a stiletto." She flashed it out from her bosom.

Winchester yawned. "My quietus won't come from a bare bodkin. Don't be silly. You have fulfilled your mission, and there's nothing more to be said about it."

"But you have insulted me. You said it was necessary for him to know what mud is. Why do you blame me? I'm not worse than—than others."

"Oh, I don't blame you. Now he's seen what mud is, he'll know it again."

"It will also become necessary for him to cease to know us." She struck Winchester in the face.

"Yes, it will also become necessary for him to cease to know us," Winchester echoed. There was something in his face which the countess could not

understand, for the light of sacrifice was new to her. She decided that she would see as little of Harry as possible; she could not possibly live up to him, and he could not live down to her. Besides, these unfamiliar emotions would soon make her look as haggard as Winchester.

CHAPTER VIII

IN TOWN

THE *Lake Onontic* reached Liverpool about four o'clock on Sunday afternoon. Her leisurely rate of progression through the ice had made her a day late, and several indignant passengers threatened to write to the *Times* about it. Indeed, it required all the captain's tact and half a dozen bottles of champagne to soothe their ruffled feelings. Of course there was the usual crowd of Liverpudlians at the dock to meet the *Lake Onontic*—a crowd which, although it had decked itself in its best, was rigorously kept away from the ship by the combined aid of two stout policemen and a thick rope. Most of the passengers fluttered about endeavoring to recognize friends on the shore as the huge ship slowly drew up alongside the dock and came to a standstill. Some carried unnecessary parcels and dropped them all over the ship, whilst others solemnly exchanged cards with individuals whom they never expected, or wanted, to see again. Still, it seemed the proper thing to do, and, with the assistance of a vast amount of highly glazed pasteboard, they did it, one highly excited American (he was seeing England for the first time) even going to the

length of putting on a tall silk hat and frock coat under the impression that the custom-house officials would take him for an English gentleman and not ask awkward questions about the contents of his traveling bag—a traveling bag which had guilt written conspicuously all over its bulging sides and distended top.

In the midst of this turmoil and excitement, Winchester, with the exception of the captain, was the only person who maintained an attitude of normal calm. They had both come back to Liverpool so often that they were in no wise moved at once more beholding their native land. The countess, too (she and Harry now saw very little of each other), assumed her most distinguished manner, and surveyed the other passengers with ill-disguised contempt. The only thing which ruffled her equanimity was the discovery that she had missed the afternoon train for London, and that she must either travel by the one leaving Liverpool at midnight, or remain there until Monday morning. Neither of these alternatives appealed to her, for if she went by the midnight train she would not reach London until nearly five o'clock in the morning, and if she stayed in Liverpool there was all the discomfort of making a fresh start the next day. In these circumstances, she scolded her maid, and felt that her own life was not worth living unless she could make someone else equally uncomfortable. When she had reduced one

nervous old lady to tears, she felt better and took a prolonged farewell of Harry, at the same time assuring him that he owed her a profound debt of gratitude for having opened his eyes to the delights of the world.

Harry, after saying good-by to the countess (he was genuinely sorry to see the last of her), helped Winchester and Parsons get the luggage examined by the custom-house people. The only box which the custom-house man insisted on having opened was the one set apart for Harry's monastic robe, although the lad earnestly exclaimed that it did not contain either spirits or cigars. The official sternly insisted on seeing the contents of the box, and Harry, at last, reluctantly produced the key and handed it to the expectant examiner, who, confident that he was about to make a great discovery, awaited the opening of the box with an air of Rhadamanthine severity. When he found that it contained nothing contraband, to revenge himself for his disappointment, he held up Harry's brown robe to the public gaze, and was about to do the same with the heavy boots, still encrusted with Mahota mud, when the cold contempt in Winchester's face made him pause and drop the robe back in the box. The countess, however, had looked on at this little scene with ill-concealed amusement, and, forgetting her recent farewell, entreated Harry to give her the pleasure of seeing him suitably clad. She added that she would have

so much more faith in the efficacy of his prayers if he would only do so. It was no wonder that even the Almighty did not recognize him in a tweed suit. Harry, with an utter absence of self-consciousness, would have taken the countess at her word, in order to prove the sincerity of his intercession on her behalf, had not the custom-house official, believing him to be some new sort of amiable lunatic, hastily shut down the lid of the box, fastened it, and returned him the key. In the meantime another official discovered surreptitious bottles of scent in the countess' dressing-case, and thus diverted her attention from Harry and his robes. Then Parsons, who had taken in the whole episode with comprehending sympathy, hastily called a hansom for his master, and disappeared with the luggage in a four-wheeler. The next morning father and son went up to town by an early train, and spent the remainder of the day in a hurried rush round to tailors and outfitters, who twisted and pulled Harry about until he felt sore all over.

"I am going to hand Parsons over to you for most of the time," said Winchester the next evening. "He'll see that you don't go wrong with your clothes—a most important thing nowadays—morals always come second to clothes. Tell Parsons when you are going to do anything, and, whatever it is, he'll see that you are properly dressed for the occasion."

"But what will you do without him?" asked Harry. "Is it necessary I should have all these things?" He looked round the room in dismay at the little etceteras which Winchester and Parsons had collected for him in the course of the previous twenty-four hours. His own conviction was that they might have been sold and the money given to the poor.

"Absolutely necessary. You're not at Mahota now, where one costume does for everything, Sundays and week-days alike." Winchester smiled as he recalled the Trappists' tucked-up skirts and heavy cowls, their rough boots and mud-stained robes. "Look out of the window, Harry, and notice how people dress, although nearly everyone is out of town."

It seemed to Harry that a good many people were passing up and down Piccadilly. There was a continuous roar in his ears—a roar which made him long for the quietude of Mahota. Everyone appeared to be in a hurry, although the evening was very hot. Surely they must be fleeing from their consciences! There was a look on people's faces which was new to him, for he did not know that it was the indelible imprint of London.

The next day, when his clothes came home, Harry was full of wonderment. Tired workmen must have worked night and day in order to make them. It seemed to him wrong that he should have been the cause of their fatigue. When he men-

tioned the matter to Winchester, his father assured him that he need not trouble about it, as the tailors were only too glad to get the extra pay for night work, and that, consequently, he was a benefactor to them, and not an oppressor. Thus relieved of his misapprehensions on this point, Harry tried on the clothes with the stoicism of a red Indian, although these London-made garments were even more uncomfortable to him than the Canadian ones. Still, with heroic endurance, he let Parsons twist him about before a big mirror and explain their various uses. It seemed to him that most of his time would be occupied in changing from one suit to another. When he hinted as much to Parsons, that worthy was grieved. "You don't take a proper pride in yourself; that what's the matter, sir; it isn't the fault of the clothes. Most young gentlemen of your age, sir, lives for their clothes, and makes a study of getting of 'em on properly. You—if you'll excuse me for saying so, sir,—just drag them on any way, as if your heart wasn't really in it. Why, young Lord Pomfrey is so partickler about not creasing his trousers as to have 'em hanging from a frame fastened to the ceiling, so as he can step into 'em from off his bed without bagging the knees."

He broke off in order to instruct Harry how to fasten a dress tie properly. When he had finished dressing the lad, he stepped back and surveyed him with a critical eye.

Harry began to feel nervous. "Is there anything wrong? If so, perhaps you'll have the kindness to tell me."

"N-no, sir. No. Now your hair's grown the same length all over your head, you're all right, sir. Looks as if you'd been shootin' in furrin parts and had kept it short for—for prudential and insectorial reasons." He coughed respectfully. "Square your shoulders a bit more, sir, and you'll do. Those high collars do poke the head forward a bit; but you'll soon get used to them. I wouldn't rest my chin on the top of it if I could help it, sir."

They dined at Winchester's rooms that night, the lad quietly imitating his father in all the usages of the table. He did not drink wine, but curiously enough, had taken to smoking with great zest! It tranquilized his nerves after the strain of the day. His thin frame was already beginning to fill out a little, and the sea air had done away with the delicate pallor of his complexion. His eyes, too, lacked their curious mystical dreaminess of expression. They were keenly alert, as if always on the watch for something new. Little suggestions of quiet strength began to creep out and to contradict the habitual reserve and timidity of his manner. He had the air of one who looks on at the world, but cannot tell whether he ought to accept it, owing to his inability to understand the meaning of what it has to offer. But he

was decidedly conscious of new interests and feelings which made him eager to know more of it.

After dinner Winchester stood before the fireplace and stared at Harry with the air of one who was cogitating something for his good. "Had enough for to-day? Or would you like to do something else?" he said. "You're so tough that you don't look a bit tired. There are lots of shows still on if you'd like to do the town."

"Shows?" Harry did not know what "doing the town" meant, either. But he had been moving about all day, and even his limbs, toughened by hard work at Mahota, were tired, although he looked fit for anything. Winchester noticed his hesitation. "Why didn't I think of it?" he said suddenly. "I'm going to give you the crowning joy of your twilight life. Parsons, take a hansom and go round to Bryanston Square. Ask Mrs.—— Stay, I'll write a note."

Parsons took the note and went off. Harry, in the soft comfort of a luxurious armchair, was already half asleep. At Mahota the seats were all hard. To touch this armchair was to receive a caress. And he thought that his capacity for joy, crowning or otherwise, had been exhausted by the rush of the last twenty-four hours. He had never heard of Bryanston Square and was not interested in it; all the squares he had seen in the last day or two were very much alike. Besides, he had gone to bed

at eight o'clock for so many years that it already seemed to him past midnight. He stifled a yawn and wondered how Brother Hyacinth was succeeding with his new experiment of training a young ox to draw the monastery water-cart. At first the young ox had flatly refused to be a party to any such, in his estimation, unnecessary proceeding, and Brother Hyacinth, handicapped by his vow of silence, had not known how to impress his views on the animal after the forcible manner of worldlings. Consequently the struggle had been postponed, and Harry, as he leaned sleepily back in his armchair, wondered whether it would be renewed and with what result. He was inclined to think the natural obstinacy of the ox would be too much even for Brother Hyacinth's mild determination.

Half an hour later he woke up, to hear the parrot-like Parsons say in his customary wooden tones, "Mrs. Anstruther's compliments, sir, and she will be delighted to receive you and Mr. Harry. I've kept the hansom, sir."

"All right. Bring me my coat. Now, Harry, we're going out to make a call. It's rather unusual at this hour, but you'll thank me for it afterwards. Shall I tell you all about it, or would you rather find it out for yourself? Never mind, have some black coffee, and rouse up."

Harry, scarcely awake, jumped up and began to help his father on with his coat, greatly to the disgust of Parsons, who considered such an act an

unwarrantable interference with his duties. Then Parsons brought Harry a beautiful pearl-gray coat to hide his evening dress, and they went forth into the cool night air.

The sky was full of stars, which shone through the soft dusky haze of London smoke, and the heat of the day had gone; so had its bustle and noise. Tap-tapping of horses' feet cheerfully broke the stillness as they passed by green squares with iron railings round them—railings which kept out wistful little children who squeezed their faces between the bars, in order to see cool vistas of green turf. Here and there a brilliantly illumined public-house gave Harry the impression that some great man was entertaining a crowd of uproarious friends. People were no longer bustling about with the energetic hurry of midday. Boys and girls sauntered slowly along, their arms undisguisedly clasping one another's waists, with all that happy indifference to publicity so characteristic of the lower classes. Sometimes, they stayed beneath the shadow of a friendly tree to kiss one another. Even a stalwart policeman, clad in the shoes of silence, winked indulgently as young couples passed by, and seemed to become almost human. In a few of the great houses, gay with awnings and flower-filled window-boxes, dinner parties were going on. Winchester explained to Harry that belated politicians who had not yet left town were dining their constituents. The constituents' views

were always greatly influenced by the quality of the member's dinners. One of the brilliantly lit rooms was filled with handsome men and beautiful women in evening dress. The rose marble of exquisite shoulders shrouded in misty lace bewildered Harry. As the hansom whirled by, it brought a sob into his throat: he had not believed that even God could create anything so marvelous. He seemed to be sitting outside the world—a world which was being shown to him in order that he might become familiar with it. At one corner a drunken man and his wife were quarreling. The man struck the woman a heavy blow with his clenched fist, and cursed her as she staggered against an area railing. He wanted money; she had no money to give him; and her language was on a par with his.

Harry signaled to the driver to stop, and lightly leapt to the ground. The next moment he had rushed between the unhappy couple. As a consequence he received ill-directed blows from both, and the woman tore off his white tie—a trophy to which she clung in triumph. But her triumph was short-lived, for the lad, holding both her hands in an iron grip, turned his attention to the man and tripped him into the gutter, where he lay looking on as if the matter did not concern him. His hat, too, had rolled under the wheels of a passing cab, and was as flat as a pancake. In the absorption induced by this startling phenomenon the man's anger died away, and he affectionately en-

treated the battered hat to return to him and he would overlook its shortcomings.

The intense pity in Harry's eyes sobered the woman; she gradually ceased to struggle. "Can you not be friends?" he asked slowly. "Has God brought you and this man together only that you may disgrace yourselves?"

"He hit me," said the woman sullenly. "He hit me—I hit him back. I'll hit him again. Leave us to fight it out. It's no business of yours."

Seeing that she was quieter, Harry helped the drunkard to rise from the gutter and brought him his hat. "Perhaps I surprised you; would you like to fight me," he asked simply, "or will you let me reason with you?"

With tipsy dignity the man put on his battered hat and intimated his wish to have nothing more to do with "a hinterferin' young toff as couldn't mind his own business."

"But," said Harry, laying a persuasive hand on his coat sleeve, "I want to beg your pardon for upsetting you. I thought you meant to hurt this poor woman."

"Sho I did. Don't shay 'nother word; thash all ri'," affably replied the tipsy man. "Li'l' fam'ly dishpute—thash all. Gi' me a drink an' part fr'en's—fr'en's."

Winchester and the cabman looked on. The cabman winked at Winchester. Winchester wondered what was coming next. His own im-

pulse had been to interfere. Whilst he was thinking about it Harry had done it.

"But you ought to love and protect her," pleaded Harry; "not strike her. See, she is sorry. Ask her pardon, and be friends. Go home and love one another."

"If you'll give me prish of a drink——" began the tipsy man.

The woman suddenly staggered forward and took his arm. In her gin-soddened brain dim memories began to arise, the facile tears flowed down her haggard cheeks. "Come home, Dick," she said. "Come home. You've had enough drink to-night. The gentleman's right. Come home for—for Christ's sake! I'm sorry I hit you. Oh, my God! my God!" She wrung her hands, and looked agonized appeal to the summer sky.

"But can I do nothing for you?" pleaded Harry. "You seem poor. Father, please give me some money. I haven't any with me."

Winchester took a handful of silver from his pocket and handed it to Harry. "May I give you this?" the lad asked, with a certain timidity. "Perhaps it will help you to bear your misfortunes better, and you will not quarrel with one another. I did not mean to grieve you."

"Shert'nly," began the man. "Genelman' 'pologizes, we'll take hish mon——"

The woman tossed back tangled hair from the ruin of a beautiful face. "No, I won't let him

take your money," she said, with a certain dignity. "He's all right now. I—I'm sorry I tore your tie. What drunken beasts we both are—now. We were clean and pure as you—once. I'll take him home. He'll go now."

Her voice rang out clear, vibrant, wistful as she looked at the drunken wreck swaying against a lamp-post. "He was as beautiful as you are—once; and his soul was as clean as yours. God bless you and—good-night."

"Gor blesh you," said the tipsy man, affably waving his hand. "Pleash shee fr'en' of wife's any time. Fr'en'——"

She put her arm in his and led him away, carefully guiding his lurching steps. "He will be all right now," she said, looking back, her torn shawl dragging behind her. "He will be all right now."

After several stumbles they turned the corner, the woman stopping for a moment to gaze back at Harry's pale face. It was fixed and sad. "Now I begin to know," he was saying to himself—"now I begin to know something of the sorrows of the world. That man and woman loved one another once. I seem to remember another man and woman who used to quarrel and beat me until I ran away from them."

He got into the cab again, and they drove on. Winchester was silent; he did not even mention to Harry that he had no tie. Truly, if he had much to teach the lad, Harry had also much to teach him.

"'Now I begin to know something of the sorrows of the world.'"

When he awoke from his reverie they were nearing Bryanston Square. "So, Don Quixote," he said, as they got out of the cab, "you are tilting against windmills already."

"I do not understand you, my father. There are no windmills here."

"No, you wouldn't." He rang the bell at No. 49, and the gorgeously clad footman looked at them in undisguised amazement. He knew Winchester; but this handsome young man without a tie, and with a decidedly rumpled shirt-front, was new to him. It was an insult to his own immaculate calves that anyone should have the temerity to appear before him in such disheveled guise. "Perhaps you've had a haccident, sir," he suggested deferentially. "Would you like to go into the hante-room for repairs? I could lend you a tie, sir."

"No, thanks," said Winchester impatiently. "Just announce us. We won't keep Mrs. Anstruther waiting."

CHAPTER IX

MRS. ANSTRUTHER AT HOME

MRS. ANSTRUTHER, a fair-haired, well-preserved woman of forty-five, with the remains of great beauty, rose somewhat shyly to greet Winchester, whom she had not seen for more than a year. They had known each other in childhood, and were very good friends. The world could never understand why she had not married Winchester, especially as she had been a widow for some years. The real reason was that Winchester had not asked her to marry him. Mrs. Anstruther and her daughter Betty were his sole remaining illusions, and he feared that marriage with the mother might rob him of his lingering remnants of faith in the sanctity and nobility of women. Besides, when he remembered Lady Geste, he did not dare to marry any woman.

"So pleased that you have found out we are still in town," Mrs. Anstruther said; and it was very evident from her manner that she meant it. "The lawyers insist on keeping me here until Friday—something about leases and things: tenants never can pay their rent, nowadays; they seem to think it is their landlord's duty to do it for

them. It is all very well to talk about agricultural depression, but I can assure you that it's nothing to mine when I look into accounts sometimes. You know how difficult it is to escape from the grip of the law; even when you are in a hurry to get away to your roses."

Winchester, without saying anything, smiled down upon her with evident pleasure, she was so sweet and fair and wholesome to look upon. He did not like to think, when she gazed up at him in the old confiding way, that he had told her lies—necessary lies, but still lies—about Harry. If he did not take Harry about as the son of an early but mysteriously concealed marriage, there would be no chance of introducing him to a girl like Betty Anstruther, and he wanted Betty to like Harry very much. He could then depart in peace to the Land of the Ponemah, after having made some slight atonement for his own misdeeds.

"So—" Mrs. Anstruther turned to Harry—"this is your son. You never before, in all the years we have known each other, told me that you were married and had a son; but then you always left undone the things you ought to have done, and, if report says truly, did the things you ought not to have done. How well you have kept the secret! But why did you keep it from me?"

"There were reasons," began Winchester. The only way to expiate the past was to avow Harry as his son everywhere. Lady Geste would

not say that there had been no marriage, and, as far as she was concerned, the secret was safe; it interested no one but Harry, and Winchester did not intend the lad's life to be embittered by the knowledge unless it were absolutely necessary that he should learn the truth.

"Ah, yes," said Mrs. Anstruther, "we all know the reasons for secret marriages, or think that we do. But, in spite of your secrecy, I always thought you were married, and so did others. People are generally right in the long run. But your son looks—" she cast an amused glance at Harry's rumpled shirt-front—"as if he had been having an adventure to-night. Has he—" her amused glance again traveled over Harry's disordered attire—"has this youthful knight-errant from the Canadian wilds been rescuing Beauty in distress? Or has Beauty rescued him? Perhaps that is the Canadian national costume? You always had an eye for the picturesque."

Winchester presented Harry, and explained: "He looks so much more picturesque this way that I thought he would make a better impression. Besides, it would have meant turning back again for repairs, and I wanted to see you. He does look more picturesque than if he had come fresh from the hand of my man, doesn't he? You couldn't realize all that there is in him if you thought him as characterless as I am."

"Ah, but you were always charmingly unconven-

tional." Mrs. Anstruther suppressed the amusement in her glance as it again fell momentarily upon Harry. "This is the noble savage, is it? The savage who has been on the warpath in Canadian wilds all these years?"

"Yes, this is the noble savage who has been running wild in Canada, though there aren't any warpaths now in what a certain noble duke calls 'the land of rude plenty'. I want you to tame him for me. But where is Betty? I haven't seen her since she was a beautiful child of fifteen. You carefully kept her out of my way. Did you think I should make her unconventional also?"

"I did not think she was quite ripe enough for you. You were always so easily bored, whereas Betty is wildly interested in everything, from beetles to boomerangs. She was here five minutes ago." Mrs. Anstruther turned towards a curtained recess by the window. "Betty, are you there? If so, get a knife and come and help me to scalp savages."

"Don't be so ferocious, mamma." There was a ripple of amused laughter from the recess. "What do you mean? Oh, it is you, Mr. Winchester! It is Mr. Winchester, isn't it? I thought you had forgotten me? Why have you neglected me all these years?" She came out of the recess. "Since when have you become a noble sav——!" The girl stopped in momentary surprise, for she had not noticed Harry. "Why, there are two of

you! Is this the—the papoose? That is the proper word, isn't it?"

"Betty, don't be frivolous. This is not a papoose, or a squaw, or a wigwam, or wampum, or anything Fenimore-Cooperish, but merely young Mr. Winchester, who has come home to be civilized. My daughter—Mr. Winchester."

"How do you do, Mr. Winchester Number Two?" The girl frankly gave him her pretty hand. "That will be nice. Do you spell 'sivilized' in the same way that Huckleberry Finn does, and may I help in the good work? Why do you want English civilization? Isn't Canada's big enough for you? When Captain Kennedy came back from the Rockies last year he said that the mountain goats were too civilized to be shot at."

"He doesn't really, you know. In his heart, he abhors civilization," laughed Winchester. "That is why he goes about without a tie. Betty—I may call her Betty?" he appealed to her mother—"you are worth coming back to England to see. You—" his voice softened—"are your mother over again."

Harry's staid, earnest gaze was fixed on the young girl's laughing face. Men who had once looked at Betty Anstruther always felt that they wanted to look again. Dressed very simply in white, she was tall, beautifully proportioned, with fair hair, regular features, and the sweetest blue

eyes under heaven. There was a friendliness in her candid regard which encouraged him to look at her. Her manner at once conveyed sympathy. Something untoward had happened, but he was not to blame.

"He has been tilting at windmills," Winchester explained. "And when you tilt against windmills, they rather interfere with the propriety of your costume, that's all. It's my fault for not letting him go back to be repaired. Besides, I wanted to try his nerve. A creature of civilization would never have dared to present himself before you in this unconventional disarray. He doesn't know any better. When he realizes what I have made him do, he will humble himself in the dust."

"Come and tell me about it whilst mamma scolds your father for deserting us all this time," said the girl, making room on the sofa beside her. "When she received your father's note, she told me that you have been brought up in a monastery where there are no women at all, and that has given you a bad impression of us as a sex. She says that I am to do my best to enlighten you; that we are not so bad as you have been taught to believe; and that I am to treat you very seriously. I am also to preserve an open mind on the subject of monasteries. I am quite ready to do so, for I know nothing about monasteries except that their methods must necessarily be an improvement upon

those of the warpath. What do you do in a monastery? Good works? Cannot one do good works in the world as well as out of it? It always seems to me it wants much more courage to live in the world than out of it. Tell me."

She looked so frankly interested that Harry briefly sketched out his daily life in the monastery. His voice was improving in tone from constant use, and gradually becoming impressive.

The girl listened gravely. "And yet you were going to bury yourself alive there away from your fellow creatures! You remind me of the man who became a Trappist and peeled potatoes 'to the glory of God' for the rest of his life. Don't you think you could do more for your fellow creatures by remaining with them in the world? Besides (we've Irish blood in us), potatoes are always so much nicer when they are not peeled."

"I was too young to think—then."

"And now?"

"Perhaps I am not old enough. My father has decided for me. I—I hadn't him in the monastery. It is all so new. You are so new. My head swims with it all. I feel as if I ought to do penance for enjoying it so much, for coming into it, and looking forward to it."

"I cannot realize," the girl said brightly, "that you—pardon my rudeness—are not a survival of the Middle Ages. We must not let you stray back into them. Don't most people go into monasteries

when they are tired of the world, or have experienced some great sorrow?"

"Some do; others have a vocation to intercede for the world."

"How do they know that the world has not a vocation to intercede for them? Surely one does not become sinless because one is isolated from the world."

"One has greater opportunities——" Harry began, overwhelmed by this new view of things. "But I can't think so quickly as you do, and my tongue is quite rusty. I have to look at words in a dictionary sometimes."

The girl glanced at his shirt-front and smiled. "Don't think me very rude, Mr. Winchester, but you would not have had the opportunity of getting that shirt crushed in a monastery. I can hear your father telling mamma all about it."

"No," Harry naïvely admitted, "because in a monastery there would not be a shirt to crush." Then he turned scarlet at having made such an admission. "You see what a savage I am," he said, with perfect honesty; "I should not speak of such things. When I tell my father he will be grieved with me."

Betty laughed. "It is delightful to hear of such things. Do you know, you give me the impression of being absolutely honest. I should like to hear more about your ideals. But perhaps you have been silent so long that you cannot formulate them.

Solitude sometimes saps the intellect instead of strengthening it."

Harry tried to collect his thoughts. "As you say, I think slowly. It is all so different, so very different from this." He looked round at the luxuriously furnished room and thought of the bare floors, the wooden cells and whitewashed walls of Mahota, the perpetual vegetables, the constant self-denial.

She made a gesture of assent. Her blue eyes were bent upon him with an expression half eager, half wistful. "Tell me," she said. "Of course there is a mystery how your father lost you, but I understand that he does not wish you to talk about that. It is sometimes so good for us to escape from our own world into that of another, to hear how the rest of the world acts, thinks, and lives."

"One's days—and nights—were passed in work! prayer! silence! We lived in a dream, moved about the fields in a dream. Every quarter of an hour, day and night, the monastery bell tolled to remind us of the passage of time—that we were mortal; and when the bell tolled, the thought came to us that we had no fear of death. Now and again one of the brothers died and was carried out in his hooded robe to the little graveyard; but still we had no fear. At other times we studied the deaths of the Church's martyrs; and were never afraid. Death is only fearful to those who know it not. In the darkness of the night, we rose and prayed for

the souls of those passing away in the outer world; we ate little—our food was of the coarsest; we mortified the body with manual labor until we nearly fainted from fatigue. We hewed wood and drew water, made our own clothes, planted vegetables and fruit trees, and, in the midst of our toil, fell on our knees on the bare earth while the Father whose duty it was performed the office. Each day was exactly the same. Sometimes the wind blew and the rain fell; sometimes the piercing cold gripped us to the bone; but wet or cold, dull or fine, the day's labor was always the same. The allotted task was performed to the second. In our hour of recreation I learned to paint the faces that sometimes came to me in dreams. That was my great pleasure, but I did not do it often, lest it should become a snare."

"Were you happy?" asked the girl softly. "Wasn't it rather dreary when you thought of all the things God had sent into the world to make you happy? They could not have been all things of evil, you know; and if they came from heaven how could they be a snare to prevent you finding your way to the place from which they came? You must have been so young, too. Had you no pleasures, no friends, nothing to call your own? Did you not long sometimes to speak to the very stones even? Was there no one you wanted to love, or who wanted to love you?" Tears filled her eyes as she thought of this poor little fellow with half-

formed brain trying to comprehend a world without love in it.

"There was the Crucified Christ; and there was the Blessed Virgin."

"But did not your very love for God," asked the girl sadly, "teach you the sweetness of human love? Did it never occur to you that God had given you the power of loving, to make your power of helping all the greater—that where there is no love there can be no desire to help the people around us? Did you, in your loneliness, never think of this great, striving, bustling world of humanity and how you could help it, not by your own selfish isolation, not by your prayers, but by deeds of brotherly love such as you have performed to-night? As we have been talking I have heard your father speaking of it. Surely one act of human love and kindness such as yours is of more avail with God than a thousand prayers through the gloom of a monastery. God is not a God of darkness; He is a helpful God. He is Light—Sunshine—Happiness; not Sin—Sorrow—Solitude! God wants—means us all to be happy, and not to be perpetually telling Him how unworthy we are of His creative power." She paused, bewildered by her own vehemence.

Harry listened in amazement. "Tell me more," he said simply. "Tell me more."

She smiled. "What must you think of me! If your father had not been so old a friend I could not

have said all this, although I feel it. I, who have never given up anything, talk like a headstrong girl to you, who meant to give up everything for the whole of your life."

"No," he said sadly, "you are mistaken. I am rapidly beginning to discover that I never knew anything, and so have given up—nothing! Nearly all I remember is that the good monks took me in and did their best for me when I was a child. I cannot tell you how it came about, but they were very good to me. I was brought to Canada, and the people who brought me ill-used me. I ran away from them one day, meaning to kill myself and thus escape from them. Owing to some trickery on the part of those who ought to have cared for me, my father lost sight of me. I can remember how he loved me when I was a little fellow. When I saw that man and woman quarreling to-night, it all suddenly came back to me. The people from whom I ran away, drank—that was why they beat and ill-used me. When I escaped from them and came to the gates of the monastery, the peace, the silence of it, seemed as if Heaven had led me thither from the storm outside. Day by day I grew more absorbed in the monastic life, the ecstasy of prayer. Every moment had its appointed task. When one brother relapsed and went back into the world, I grieved for him as if the sin had been my own. After he had been absent two years, God heard our prayers and he

returned to us, though only to die. The world for which he longed so much had killed him. It was Death who took him by the hand outside the monastery walls; there was——"

"A living death within them. Something tells me that you have come into the world again to find your soul, not to lose it."

"It is as God wills. Only, the world is very noisy. Even its happiness cries aloud as if it feared to be mistaken for misery. In the cloister one can always pray."

"Yes—pray!" The young girl was almost contemptuous. "In the world, one can always act!"

"Is action better than prayer?"

"Sometimes. In the world one can always act instead of dream, protect the helpless, succor the poor."

"But it bewilders me. I woke up in the night, and the roar of London was a menace, a threat. It told me to go back to my prayers, that I had had enough of the world."

"Oh, no, you have not! Believe me when I tell you that you have not yet given it a fair chance. I feel it to be my duty to tell you, as if that is why your father brought you here to-night. You do not understand it. For the matter of that, I do not understand it, either; but I understand it better than you do, because I have seen more of it and have been gradually brought up to it.

Think you there are no good men, no good women, in the world? I am only a girl, but I see the sunshine, and I say to myself, 'God sends it'. I play with happy little children, and I say to myself, 'God sends them'. I see men and women bearing the burdens of the world, and I say to myself, 'God sends them also'. I see fortitude, courage, compassion in all the little daily deeds of life; and I know that we are here to be merciful and compassionate one to another, to bear each other's burdens, to live in the sunshine. Oh, you don't know what a happy, beautiful world it is! You don't know! Your ignorance of it moves me to compassion. Some day you will realize what you have lost all these years—that you have flung God's gifts in His face because you knew not what they were. But forgive me. I, a perfect stranger, have no right to say these things to you. Your father has known me since I was a little child, and that must be my excuse. Why did he leave you all these years? Your face is not a happy one; you have suffered much in trying to hide from yourself that you suffered at all. Why did not your father claim you before? My mother tells me there is a mystery about you. But I know it is wrong of me to ask, and that you must not tell me."

Harry could not tell why his father had abandoned him all these years, for he did not know. Why was everyone outside the monastery so anxious to make him think the best of a world which the

good Fathers had persistently taught him to avoid? He began to be aware that he knew rather less than nothing about it; but he felt instinctively that this girl was sweet and noble and good, that she wanted to help him to see things in a true and holy light. Could it be that the silence on which he had prided himself was a mistake—only another form of selfishness? If God had given speech to man, was it not for some good purpose? He was bewildered, and did not know what to say to this impetuous girl in whose candid blue eyes shone the light of goodness, whose loveliness was not a snare of the devil, but a revelation from Heaven. He bowed his head in sudden humility; she was wiser than his teachers. When he looked into her face it dawned upon his slow comprehension that the truth had been revealed to her. Her sweet friendliness was an answer to all his doubts and fears.

"You must give the world a fair trial," pleaded the girl. "Give it a fair trial, or you will go back to your monastery, and never, never understand it."

He promised to give the world a fair trial, and she looked at him with renewed interest—this young semi-saint who had come to redress the wrongs of a world of which he was as innocent as a baby. The girl had been so carefully brought up that of real evil she was almost as ignorant as himself; but she had read much, was full of theories, and found life abounding in interest. The gray

monotony of monastic days, the scourging and crucifixion of self, seemed to her nothing more than useless protests against the talents given to one for the advantage of the world—an excuse to save one's self the responsibility of exercising them.

"Suppose you had taken the final vows," she urged, "and found out that you had made a mistake? What then?"

"Nothing. If one makes mistakes—" she saw the light of martyrdom in his eyes—"one must abide by them. Some mistakes can never be altered."

Mrs. Anstruther glided towards them—a vision of portly beauty, exquisite taste in dress, and charming hospitality. "You are to come to us at Antholin," she said to Harry, with kindly emphasis. "Your father intends to leave you in my care a little while to—to—" she smiled—"to see what I can do with you. If you must have windmills to tilt at, Betty can show you plenty. She is rather given to doing the same sort of thing herself, so you will have a good deal in common. Besides, your father and I can always pay the expenses if the windmills have to be rebuilt."

Harry murmured confused thanks.

"I have told your father," continued Mrs. Anstruther, "that he is an eccentric monster to make you the victim of all his social experiments. Much better leave you to find out things for yourself, and not worry about them. He seems to think

that if you don't fit the existing arrangements of the universe, they must be altered to fit you."

"Oh, well," said Winchester, pulling his long mustache, "if the existing arrangements cannot be altered, you must find out some other way. Harry is very docile—in some things; in others, he is as stubborn as a mule."

"I like mules," Mrs. Anstruther declared. "There is a patient persistency of purpose about mules which is extremely alluring; it is so often misunderstood; and they always score in the long run. Now, Betty, Mr. Winchester would like to hear you play. He declares that you have grown out of all recognition, and he wants to be able to place you again. You used to play to him in the old days."

The girl obediently rose and went to the piano. Seeing that Harry did not move, Winchester followed her to turn over the music.

As a liquid stream of melody flowed through the air, Mrs. Anstruther took Betty's place and began to chat with Harry. Presently the music babbled to him of sunshine, butterflies, song-birds, humming of bees, the laughter of happy children, ripple and flow of running waters, rosy dawns and meadows fair. There was not a sad note in it; it sounded like champagne translated into music. Though Harry had never tasted champagne, the music stirred his pulses, filled him with gladness and exultation, opened cells in his brain long

stunned by the reverberate thunder of the monastery organ.

"Good!" thought Mrs. Anstruther, watching him closely. "They have not yet stifled all his susceptibilities; most of them are only dormant; soon, they will begin to work in a hurry. Bruce was always a little mad even when we were boy and girl together. Perhaps that is why he wishes me to help him to undo the results of his folly. But he is very loyal, and if there were any harm in the lad, he would not bring him to see Betty. How sad and ill Bruce looks! If he is not careful he will end his own days in either a madhouse or a monastery."

Winchester, wholly unconscious of this silent prediction, lost his customary saturnine air, as he leaned over Betty and complimented her on her music. When it ended, the girl turned round to Harry. "There is an organ in the music-room at Antholin. You must hear it when you come to us."

Her sweet friendliness to a stranger overwhelmed Harry. Then he remembered that it was for his father's sake. "If my father permits," he said, his tired brain becoming sluggish after the excitement of the music.

"Ah, Betty, if you were only as well trained," smiled her mother. "There is something to be said for a monastic life, after all. Come to us at Antholin, and say it, Mr. Winchester."

When father and son reached the cool night air outside, Winchester proposed to walk back. He seemed to be waiting for Harry to speak, but Harry said nothing. He understood that his father had taken him to see the Anstruthers as a reward because he had not reproached him about the countess. "Are you not coming to this place called Antholin, too?" the lad asked, later, as they turned into Piccadilly.

Winchester was conscious of a thrill of genuine pleasure at being really wanted by somebody. "Oh, you'll be able to get on well enough without me," he said lightly. "You don't want to be tied to my apron-strings all your life. You'd soon be looking for a knife to cut them."

"But I want you, my father." It was not often that Harry presumed to argue with his father.

"Oh, I'll come down to see you soon," said Winchester. "If you get into any difficulties let me know; but Parsons is an admirable dry-nurse." His smile, as he nodded "good-night" to his son, was almost tender.

In the solitude of his own room Harry fell on his knees before a picture of Christ crucified, and began to pray. To-night the agonized eyes smiled back at him; there was no sorrow in them. Their awful sweetness filled the young man's soul with light. He forgot the scourge at the bottom of the box which contained his brown robe, and fell

asleep with an answering smile upon his lips. The world's Christ was more human than the monastery's. Hitherto, he had known only the one; now, he must learn to know them both. Perhaps, after all, they were but one.

CHAPTER X

ANTHOLIN

NOW, mind, if you want me at any time, send a wire, and I'll be at Antholin as soon as an express can bring me," said Winchester, fussing round Harry like a hen with one chicken.

"I want you now, my father," said Harry, putting on his gloves with an air of distaste, for they worried him.

"No, no, my lad, better save me up for extraordinary occasions. I have been taking too much out of myself lately, and must rest quietly in town."

Harry took off his gloves, methodically smoothed out the creases, and put them on the table with an air of relief. "If you are ill, I stay with you, my father."

"Pshaw! It's nothing serious. Be off with you, or you'll miss your train. Stay a moment, and I'll come with you to the station. If you were left to your own devices, you might take the wrong train for Antholin. Mrs. Anstruther and her daughter are going to make things pleasant for you—ask some of the people round there to meet

you, and all that sort of thing. You can follow their advice implicitly, and if you feel that you must worship somebody, worship them both, for you will never meet two sweeter types of English womanhood in its highest and best form. Betty is a little romantic and visionary, but, in this matter-of-fact age, is none the worse for that. My dear lad, if you only realized it, it is worth having been in a monastery all these years so that you can come untarnished with the follies of the average young man to the proper appreciation of so sweet a girl. If Betty Anstruther once believes in you, it will be easy for you to believe in yourself."

Harry pondered this advice for a moment. "I would rather believe in her," he said seriously. "She is so different from the—the lady on board ship."

Winchester laughed. "Oh, if you have found that out, you are already in a fair way to salvation. Now, pick up your gloves, and be off with you. Don't forget to tip everybody, and if you are not sure about the right amounts, ask Parsons. He has made a scientific study of the question ever since he has been with me."

Winchester saw the train start, and then went off to consult a specialist, for his heart was troubling him a good deal, and he did not get much sleep in consequence.

"Been a soldier, haven't you?" asked the specialist, after thumping and prodding him about.

"Yes," said Winchester, "but what has that to do with it?"

The specialist leaned gravely towards him. "It is better to tell you that you have got your marching orders; it is only a question of a few months. If I were you I would live as quietly as possible, avoid all mental worry"—he looked at him keenly for a moment—"and put your affairs in order. I'm afraid I can't do any more for you."

Winchester did not flinch. "Thanks," he said, with equal gravity.

"Avoid all mental trouble and—and strong emotion," said the specialist, following him to the door. "You've been worried a good deal lately, and that is still more prejudicially affecting your heart. Take my advice; live as quietly as you can."

Winchester shook hands with the specialist. "Thanks," he said, and went away with that erect, soldierly air which fascinated Harry, who was well on his road to Antholin, and looking out of the window with a certain apprehensive nervousness as the train neared the little station where he was to get out.

"I'll come on with the things, sir," said Parsons, eying with strong disfavor the smart young groom in the dog-cart which awaited them when they reached their destination. "I wouldn't trust my neck in a high-wheeled thing like that, not if you paid me for it." Parsons' language was somewhat

ambiguous, and left Harry in doubt as to whether he referred to his own neck or the trap.

The young groom, disdaining to bandy words with Parsons, beckoned to the village flyman to come forward and load up the luggage. Then he respectfully touched his hat to Harry, told the flyman to go to the horse's head, and jumped down from the dog-cart.

Seeing what was expected from him, Harry got up on the driving seat and took the reins. Old Father Ambrose had taught him to manage the somewhat skittish blood stock which was raised for sale at the Monastery, and he knew a good deal about horses. The big up-standing gray danced round the station yard a little, just to feel whether his new driver had a light hand, and then settled down into a spanking trot along the highroad leading to Antholin. Harry, as soon as the gray had got well into his collar, stole a glance behind him to see what had become of the groom. That smart young individual sat on the back seat with folded arms, and hung on by his eyelids, although it seemed that a sudden turn in the road must send him flying through the air. But he was prepared for corners, and, in some miraculous manner, escaped mishap.

As they drove out of the little rustic station Harry could hear Parsons grumbling at having to travel in a mere common fly instead of a more comfortable vehicle. The flyman, with bucolic

vigor, maintained that his fly was good enough for anybody, and "Lunnon folk" might either take it or leave it; whereupon Parsons declared that he would take it under protest.

The village consisted of the customary High Street, an old Norman church, and a quaint market-place through which ran the road to Antholin. This level road leading out of the village was Harry's first real introduction to the fatted peace, the sober propriety of an English landscape. The orderly hedgerows, trimmed to a nicety, the magnificent trees, each in its appointed place, the fields green with the aftermath, the macadamized road, every stone firmly fixed, the flower-filled gardens in front of the little red cottages, the tiled walks leading up to rustic farmhouses embowered in honeysuckle and capped with thatched roofs, the cool and shallow streams wherein the dappled kine stood knee-deep, swishing away the flies with long, restless tails—all these appealed to him with a sense of satisfying beauty. There was none of the wild grandeur of Canada; no stone walls divided the fields, no huge rocks were scattered recklessly about the pastures by some Titanic upheaval of centuries ago; no mountain ranges rose heavenward, with snow-capped summits; mournful cedar and resinous pine, prostrate poplars scarred and maimed by forest fires, were alike conspicuous by their absence; no slinking wolves crept out of the coppices to worry the flocks which lay beneath the lofty oaks;

cry of coyote and gabble of blue jay gave place to the watch-dog's honest bark, the raucous croak of homing rooks. In place of the gopher lording it over the lonely prairie, chattering squirrels leaped from tree to tree, and, in lieu of darting hummingbirds, gorgeous kingfishers perched by the wayside pools, or flashed their jeweled wings athwart the sunlight when they heard the rattle of the gray's hoofs.

Suddenly the road turned and skirted an English park, filled with groups of dappled deer who raised mild, inquiring eyes towards the disturbers of their peace. There was a little stone lodge at the entrance to the park, which was covered with climbing roses. To Harry's astonishment, the gray refused to stop, but made straight towards the gates, which were worked with a lever inside the cottage by a bedridden old man, and suddenly flew open just as a smash seemed inevitable. Through the middle of the park ran a smooth, white, level road, between an avenue of lofty elms, and at the end of the road, on the summit of a steep hill, stood Antholin, crowned with all the glory of the setting sun and the dignity of ten centuries of decay. It was evident, even from the distance, that only a part of the old house was inhabited, for it tapered off in a long low line of ruined walls and crumbling battlements about which the jackdaws wheeled in crowds and conducted their noisy affairs with that disregard for the convenience of others which has

been the most marked characteristic of the insolent daw-cock since he first inflicted himself on mankind.

As he drew near to Antholin, its venerable beauty penetrated a soul satiated with the painful modernity of the monastery, and Harry felt inclined to take off his hat to this gray, frowning remnant of ages past—this scarred, time-stained, battle-marked relic of barbarism, with its drawbridge and moat, its peafowl spreading the glory of their plumage on the green lawn in front, and the ivy which clung to its one lofty tower and battlements, and effaced the shape of the low entrance itself.

An occasional shriek of a peacock on the lawn betokened coming rain. The dog-cart wheels and the hoofs of the gray sounded almost ostentatiously loud as they rattled over the drawbridge, now a permanent way, and dashed up in front of the entrance. A lean and toothless servitor, clad in customary black and bent with age, awaited Harry's descent from the dog-cart and showed him to his room through a long, vaulted corridor, on the stone floor of which their steps echoed noisily. Rusty weasons hung upon the walls; a monastic gloom pervaded the place as they climbed an uncarpeted stone staircase. On the first landing, however, they came into contact with barbarism modified to suit the requirements of the present century. Quaint iron rings took the place of door knobs, and on turning one of these Harry found

himself in a pleasant room, with leaded casements, and oak floor almost black with age. Luxurious Persian rugs were scattered about the floor, dainty pictures hung upon the prettily papered walls, and a modern bedstead and lounge chairs and tables counteracted the severity of the past. There were fresh flowers in Venetian vases on the dressing-table; and the old man hovered round Harry with proffers of service on his lips, evidently anxious to see how this new guest was impressed by his surroundings. He had been told that Harry was a "foreigner," and felt that the honor of the British Empire depended upon the young stranger seeing things in the most favorable light.

The new guest was somewhat shy, but evidently appreciative, as he began to remove the dust of travel, the old man waiting respectfully upon him, towel in hand. "You'll find the ladies in the Rose Garden, sir," he said, when Harry had finished his ablutions. "Dinner's at eight, luncheon at two, and breakfast's going all the morning. Nobody waits for nobody at breakfast, sir. Miss Betty's always down first, and generally breakfasts alone. If you're ready, sir, I'll show you the way to the Rose Garden."

Harry followed the wizened old man along the vaulted corridor, through which the evening sun fell in dusty bars from a window at the opposite end. He was conscious of an eager desire to see Betty again, to hear from her pretty lips all that

she had said to him a fortnight ago in Bryanston Square. He understood now that she had acquired her ideas of the world from having been brought up in the seclusion of Antholin. The sudden transition from this timeworn haunt of the past to busy London had evidently caused her to institute comparisons not all in favor of Antholin. But he also understood where she had imbibed her spirit of reverence, for these crumbling walls had spoken to her and had not spoken in vain: every mossy stone within them contained a message from the past. When he had asked Winchester to tell him something about Antholin, his father had declined to do so on the ground that he did not wish to influence his impressions. "If you know all about the place beforehand, you won't find it so interesting," his father had said; "and I am inclined to think that you will find Antholin as interesting as the people in it. It is fifty miles from London, to begin with; and anyone who can voluntarily spend six months in the year away from London must have some compensating advantages. I believe that most people do it to economize. The Anstruthers would be comfortably enough off, were it not for Mrs. Anstruther's unreasoning love for that moldy old ruin, which costs twice as much to keep up as a nice, new modern house; but she and Betty love every stone of it, and won't have it altered. When an American millionaire offered to buy it and set it up again near Chicago, they wouldn't listen to him;

if they had been men, they would have kicked him off the place. As they were only women, they wrote him sarcastic little notes which he could not understand. Mrs. Anstruther told him that to put Antholin in Chicago would be like starting a pork factory in Westminster Abbey, and the millionaire said in reply he had been informed that there were a good many hogs buried in Westminster Abbey already."

The Rose Garden was set in the side of a terrace sloping down to the moat. On the lower part of the slope grew a dense thicket of alders; on the higher level the roses bloomed in quaint beds, the points of which converged towards an old mossy sundial with the customary "Laborare est orare" nearly undecipherable on its weather-ravaged shaft. The necessity for labor did not seem urgent in the midst of these beautiful flowers, unless indeed some subtle warning was meant to be conveyed that all this beauty could not be maintained without prayerful effort. Beneath a weeping willow on the grassy lawn, immediately above the milk-white and vivid red of the roses, Harry saw a shimmer of silver, a flutter and foam of white dresses interspersed with the darker shade of a man's coat. Musical voices were wafted towards him, full of happy laughter. Then Mrs. Anstruther and Betty emerged from the shelter of the willow, followed by a young man in riding costume, and all three came to meet him, the young man—he was nearly

five feet in height, and had a pimply nose of an indefinite order of architecture—looking at Winchester as superciliously as if the latter were some curious insect brought up on a pin for his inspection. He seemed to have a proprietary interest in the ladies, and his drooping eyelids conveyed the information that he could not condescend to look at nobodies who sprang up at a moment's notice and were visibly in the way.

Mrs. Anstruther was a shade less cordial to Harry than she had been in town. Perhaps the young man behind her exercised a restraining influence over her manner. He was so unmistakably prosperous and "new," so satisfied that the universe had been created for his exclusive benefit, that it seemed necessary to ask his permission to live on it before approaching him. His countenance did not clear when Betty came impulsively forward and obliterated him from the landscape with one glance. She seemed instinctively to realize that it would be better to keep him in the background until he understood from her manner that the newcomer was a favorite of hers; and Sir Eustace Carne, who, in the occasional brief intervals when he failed to think of his own importance, was no fool, knew perfectly well that he was not to be unpleasant to the newcomer on pain of incurring Betty's intense displeasure. As he did not wish to make her angry, he modified his manner until it was a shade less offensive, and, with an effort, asked Harry how

he liked England. His tone implied that of course Harry would not be fool enough to say that he did not like England, but that it did not matter either way. Then, without waiting for an answer, he turned his pimply nose to Mrs. Anstruther, and Betty carried Harry off to give him some tea beneath her favorite willow.

"The son of an old friend," they heard Mrs. Anstruther explain to Sir Eustace. "He has been brought up in Canada, and is very—very original."

"I should have thought Canada a very good country for him to stay in. You don't mean to say he has ideas?" asked Sir Eustace, in an alarmed tone. "He might be an anarchist, or faith-healer, or something else of the cheap and nasty sort."

Betty stole an amused glance at Harry. She was evidently repressing an overwhelming desire to throw a teacup after Sir Eustace, whose ideas of good taste appeared to be as novel as they were unpleasant, for her pretty fingers clenched themselves tightly round the dainty china. Then she altered her mind. Either the china was too expensive, or Sir Eustace was too insignificant for such a sacrifice. "He is coming back to dinner," she said to Harry. "Then you can try some of your ideas on him. It might do him good to pretend that you are an anarchist who has come to blow up Carne as a moral protest."

She looked at Harry in astonishment. It was barely a fortnight since she had seen him in Bryan-

ston Square, and yet there was an indefinable change in him. He had not been at all nervous on meeting Sir Eustace. For so grave a young man there had even been a sudden lighting up of his beautiful eyes as if he had dared to be amused at the peculiarities of Sir Eustace's person. His grave dignity relaxed a little, and the young baronet's idiosyncrasies did not appear to give him more than a passing thought. "Are all young English noblemen as little as that?" he asked Betty, when Sir Eustace had lounged up the slope, and bowed languidly from the top.

"Not all; besides, he isn't hereditary—only the second generation. He hasn't quite got used to it yet," said Betty, pouring out the tea. "That's why he condescends to us. He says we are so old that he can pick up 'no end of wrinkles' from us."

"But why does he want to be wrinkled?"

"I forgot you don't understand English slang." She laughed joyously. "Some people are rather ridiculous. Mamma thinks I ought not to be so hard upon his little foibles and weaknesses. On the other hand, he says that mamma is the only woman who understands him; but, then, mamma's capacity for patience is infinite." Betty spoke as if she found Sir Eustace rather trying.

After Betty had given him his tea in an eggshell cup, the fragility of which was a constant terror to Harry lest he should break it, she took him to feed the peafowl on the front lawn, making a pretty

picture as she stood there on the green grass in her white dress with a bunch of red roses tucked into her dainty waist. The peafowl strutted round her, showing off their wondrous plumes, and pecking spitefully at the only white one among them when he dared to approach Betty. This, of course, was quite sufficient to enlist Betty's sympathies in his favor, and the white bird received more than his proper share of food. Indirectly Harry understood that the nearest way to Betty's heart was to be persecuted. She seemed to find his own taciturn presence quietly satisfying. "Sir Eustace talks all the time about himself," she confided to Harry. "Please do not think me indiscreet for talking so much about him; but he has been here since three o'clock, and I am unequal to the strain. It costs him such an effort to live down to me. If he would only be natural, we should get on so much better."

Harry began to feel sorry for Sir Eustace, although he did not understand that women have nerves. Betty had gone through a trying London season, and was inclined to be a little hard upon her neighbor at Carne.

As a rule she was pleasant and sweet to all comers, and she would have continued to be so to the youthful baronet, had not the latter, in an unfortunate moment, intimated to Mrs. Anstruther that he rather approved of her daughter, very much in the same way that it pleases the lord of

"'Sir Eustace talks all the time about himself,' she confided to Harry."

the harem to throw his handkerchief to a favorite. Sir Eustace had supplemented this satisfactory statement with a modest allusion to his own personal attractions and those of his rent-roll; the rent-roll was almost as bumptious as himself. Carne Hall was one of the handsomest residences in Warwickshire; and the orchids at Carne were enough to cause any ordinary young woman's mouth to water. But Betty was not an ordinary young woman; she preferred roses to orchids. Sir Eustace irritated her; Harry's grave, steadfast presence soothed her overstrung nerves; and he was so simple that every moment in his society partook of the nature of the unexpected. Having no precedents by which to govern his conduct, he did what he thought to be right, regardless of consequences. Things which Sir Eustace regarded as a matter of course (including his marriage with Betty) were miracles to Harry. Betty was the most wonderful experience he had yet undergone; she even made him forget that meteoric countess who had flashed across his path only to disappear in the wildernesses of London and Paris.

Betty gave the peafowl her last crumb, and watched with amused surprise the change which came over Harry's face as the dressing-bell rang, for it suddenly reminded him of the monastery. He seemed to see Brother Hyacinth plodding behind the long string of cows as they filed slowly homeward and the calves in the paddock pushed

their noses through the barbed-wire fence, vainly seeking for recognition and milk. He could almost hear the plod-plod of the heavy farm horses on their way to the water trough. Presently the farmers would drive up to the cheese factory with their rattling milk-cans, and long-nosed Brother Ambrose patiently weigh their milk and enter the amount in the register kept for the purpose. In an hour all the Brothers would be sleeping the sleep of tired men, that is, those who were not praying before the Stations of the Cross. In an hour he would be arrayed by Parsons in solemn black and fine linen, and make his entry into the drawing room at Antholin. He was rather sorry to think that Sir Eustace was to be there also, and admired the energy which led him to gallop home seven miles and rush back again in time for dinner. Harry was beginning to get tired of these perpetual meals; they seemed to him so unnecessary. Always frugal, he ate sparingly at the best of times. Now, as the dressing-bell continued to ring, he wondered whether his place were still kept for him in the refectory, or whether some new postulant had taken possession of it and was known as Brother Colombe. At present he was without a country, for this beautiful England had made no sign that it regarded him as a son, and Canada, almost equally beautiful, was far away.

He walked back to the house with Betty, in the descending twilight whilst cool evening shadows

stole over the grass. One by one the peafowl, seeing that there was no more food to be had, strutted away to the neighboring shrubs, there to roost with full crops until—

"The still morn went out with sandals gray,"

and called them to display their ever-present vanity and greed.

Harry was so absorbed in seeing the throng of Brothers gliding into the monastery, after their day's labor, that he did not hear the final clamor of the rooks ere they settled down for the night. Betty, watching the tenderness which filled his fine face, thought that he must be very far away indeed. "Come," she said softly, "come, Brother Colombe; it is time to realize that you are in the world, and not at Mahota."

"How did you know I was called 'Brother Colombe'?" he stammered, the monastery fading into thin air. He looked at her almost wildly. "Brother Colombe is dying—or dead!"

"But Harry Winchester has taken his place, and unless Harry Winchester foregoes his dreams he will be late for dinner."

She touched him gently on the arm, and her manner was the manner of the Betty whom he had met and talked with in Bryanston Square.

"Of course, it is all very strange and difficult for you! You must let me help you. Your father wrote to me before you came down, telling me all

he knew of your daily life in the monastery. He thinks that I can help you, can make things easier to you. May I try? You must be so tired of having to settle all these unfamiliar things with nothing to guide you."

What answer could he make? What could he do but gaze into her sweet eyes and see the goodness in them? He was so helpless, the world was so strange to him, his brain overworked with the multiplicity of sensations and new ideas. "Thank you," he said simply. "I know very well that I am only a clod. Will you try to help me when I do not act as other men? Sometimes it seems to me the shutters of silence can never be lifted; at other times, as if only a woman's hand can remove the barrier between me and this strange world into which I have come."

She nodded brightly. "Of course I will help you. Your father used to help me with my sums. But you will be late."

He watched her run into the house, and believed in her power to explain his perplexities. On the other hand, Betty had already determined she would befriend him. He interested her far more than Sir Eustace and his orchids; they seemed to her to be equally artificial. Then she frowned. Lady Geste was coming to dinner also, and Lady Geste, in spite of her age, or because of it, always monopolized interesting young men. Perhaps, however, on this occasion, she would monopolize

Sir Eustace. But then, if one predicted a certain thing of Lady Geste, she invariably did something else. That was why old Mr. Wills so often proposed to her. He expected her to refuse him, and, guessing this, she might one day veer round and accept him. Betty smiled, and wondered what this uncertain widow would wear. Her beauty was so radiant that it seemed unfair to add to it the further attraction of Paris dresses.

CHAPTER XI

LADY GESTE

WITH Parsons' assistance, Harry was soon dressed, and made his way down the stone staircase to the drawing-room door, where a shaggy bear upreared himself and flamed fierce electric rays along the vaulted corridors. Once inside the room, Harry found it a quaint mingling of medieval and modern. The piano was incased in old oak, the windows were hidden by ancient tapestries, and the huge head of an Irish elk frowned down from over the door. The oak floor was black with age; the walls were also covered with tapestry; but all this severity of decoration was counteracted by a modern fireplace and comfortable lounge chairs. As a further and completer contrast to the pervading spirit of medievalism at Antholin, Sir Eustace Carne stood before the flower-filled fireplace warming himself from force of habit, and, after an impertinent nod to Harry, resumed his profoundly interested study of the raftered ceiling, the different compartments of which bore the arms of various county families. Sir Eustace was at least a quarter of an hour before his time, and seemed annoyed that no one else

shared his excessive zeal for over-punctuality. Harry wondered how he could possibly have reached Carne, dressed for dinner, and returned to Antholin, looking as if he had never been in a hurry in his life. He felt inclined to ask the question, but Sir Eustace was so profoundly engaged with the ceiling that it seemed rude to interrupt him.

Fortunately, just as the ceiling appeared to pall on Sir Eustace, Mrs. Anstruther appeared, followed by Betty, and lamented that a neighboring potentate was late. "And I made sure he wouldn't be late because I told him pointedly that Lady Geste was coming. You never can really rely on people in the country," she added plaintively; "they're so fond of making excuses when they break their legs, and all that kind of thing."

"Do you mean Wills?" asked Sir Eustace languidly. "You may make your mind easy on that score. He hasn't broken his legs, but I'm afraid he won't be here for a little while."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Anstruther, surprised that Sir Eustace should know anything about it. As a rule he ignored "Wills."

"Oh," said Sir Eustace coolly, "I was in rather a hurry to get back to Antholin, so I motored over —new motor—cost a cool thousand—and ran into something in a darkish, narrow lane about three miles from here. It looked like Wills' carriage. As he has just threatened me with a lawsuit about

a right of way, I thought I might as well show him that I had it in this instance, at any rate. We were going at a pretty good rate, too," he continued, with a pleased smile. "I didn't believe the thing could travel so quickly."

"And what happened? Was Mr. Wills in his carriage?"

"Not for long. I rather fancy I saw Wills trying to fly over the hedge in an amateurish sort of way. He landed on the other side with a groan —made a most indecent fuss over such a trifle."

Mrs. Anstruther was aghast. "Surely you need not have done your best to spoil my dinner-party because you are on bad terms with Mr. Wills! At any rate, you need not have murdered him."

"It did seem unkind—afterwards. At first, you see, I had no time to think. My impulse was to charge him. When I got here, I sent back the motor for him. Serve him right for not having his lamps lit. All these old fossils round here imagine that because they are justices of the peace they have a perfect right to the middle of the road even when one is in a hurry. If I'm round here much longer, Wills must learn to get out of my way, or it will be the worse for him."

"I hope you didn't think it necessary to run over Lady Geste also," said Mrs. Anstruther severely. "Really, if you destroy my eligible neighbors in this reckless way, in a little while there will not be any left. Besides, I'm very fond of

Mr. Wills. He's the kindest-hearted man in the world."

"Oh, it would take more than a motor to upset Lady Geste. As for Wills, all he has to do in future is to keep his body out of the middle of the road," said Sir Eustace indifferently. "With this new machine, I can send him flying every time. He's all right; at least, he wasn't too much hurt to swear; and there's always hope for a man when he is able to swear. Fortunately, Wills was too much upset—mentally and physically—to know what had hit him, and I took good care not to explain. It's so unnecessary to explain things." He again resumed his abstracted study of the ceiling, and stroked a miniature mustache.

There was a sound in the corridor of Betty's sympathetic tones and a high-pitched, squeaky voice excitedly telling a story. "I assure you, my dear Miss Anstruther, I was just indulging in a little nap after my hard day's work on the local bench—sentenced four poachers and one old woman—stealing sticks—when some ruffian crashed into my carriage from behind and sent me flying. All I could do was to lie in a field and groan in the most undignified manner. If it had not been for the kindness of the driver of Sir Eustace Carne's motor-car, I assure you that I should never have got here in time. He was on his way back from here and seemed full of sympathy when he heard my story. I hesitated to intrust myself to so

eccentric a vehicle until Sir Eustace's man assured me that his master would never forgive him if he did not bring me safe and sound to Antholin. A—h, my dear Mrs. Anstruther, I was just telling my young friend here of the frightful misadventure —the appalling catastrophe—which has befallen me. You can have no idea "—"Told you he wasn't dead," parenthetically remarked Sir Eustace to the ceiling—"you really can have no idea of——"

The funny little white-haired old gentleman broke off in the middle of his story to shake hands with Mrs. Anstruther. Then he suddenly caught sight of Sir Eustace and waddled over towards him. "Ah, my dear Sir Eustace, I can't tell you how much obliged I am to your man for his thoughtfulness. It is a monstrous thing—I say it is a monstrous thing—that the magistracy of a great country like England cannot travel along the public roads without being sent flying into the ditch."

"How do, Wills?" said Sir Eustace languidly. "Why do you want to practice flying in ditches at this time of night? Such beastly ditches as they are, too. Somebody pushed you in? Why didn't you catch the rascal and fine him?"

"Nothing would have given me greater pleasure, Sir Eustace, I assure you. I emphatically repeat —nothing! It is not so much the insult to myself and my horses that I resent, but as a magistrate I

represent His most gracious Majesty the King, and when I am insulted, he is insulted also. Naturally, I have His Majesty's dignity to maintain as well as my own, especially as I have every reason to believe that I shall be knighted shortly. Dear me! dear me! my spectacles are broken. No, thank goodness, they're all right. My ribs, too! Yes, they seem to be in their proper places. I trust that I am not unpardonably late, Mrs. Anstruther; but I am quite sure that you, who are so sympathetic, can understand how much I was upset. Indeed, if Miss Anstruther had not come to my help with a—a restorative, I should have broken down, I'm sure I should. I feel so upset."

"I don't wonder," said Mrs. Anstruther. "I can't think how anyone could have the heart to upset you. It must have been—" she looked very hard at Sir Eustace—"some thoughtless young man intent only on his own selfish pleasure—some young fellow who never studies the feelings of others."

"Exactly, my dear lady, exactly. But to-morrow I will have handbills distributed all over the county, and we shall capture the miscreant. Upset me! He must have been a heartless ruffian intent on his own selfish pleasures. That is just what I said when I realized what had happened, although I did not express myself with such elegance."

"Sure you didn't swear?" asked Sir Eustace.

"You ought to fine yourself if you swore—fine yourself double." Mr. Wills evidently enjoyed the importance of being upset, and was fast becoming a bore.

There was a hushed expectation as the door was opened and the *frou-frou* of silk could be heard in the corridor. Mr. Wills' expression of abject misery changed to one of rapt delight, as he forgot the pain in his ribs.

"Lady Geste!" announced the thin old servitor, who seemed to be a sort of family factotum and to occupy several important posts in the household. Even Sir Eustace became almost animated, and left off stroking his mustache.

Betty and Harry had strolled away from Mr. Wills and were looking at the armor of a medieval knight who stood sternly leaning on his sword in a little recess. She softened the asperity of his iron visage by means of a silken scarf, and then stood back a little to study its effect.

"Ah, here comes Lady Geste. She is an old friend of your father's," said Betty. "Isn't she beautiful? Did he ever mention her name to you?"

"Not that I can remember." Harry was in the recess, feeling the knight's breastplate.

"This isn't a very big man, is he?"

"No, not very," said Betty, "but please come out. Anything medieval is sure to fascinate you. Come and be introduced to Lady Geste instead."

"My dear Mrs. Anstruther, you must forgive my unpunctuality," said Lady Geste, shaking hands with Mrs. Anstruther as she swam into the room. "The road seems to be full of wrecked carriages and noisy motor-cars to-night, and my horses declined to pass either. You here, Sir Eustace? I thought you had left your country for your country's good," and she turned flashing violet eyes upon him.

Sir Eustace, almost animated, volunteered the somewhat unnecessary information that he was not abroad.

"No? Then why haven't you been to see me for the last month? Your excuse is worse than your crime."

"No, my dear lady, it is I who am all abroad to-night—very much abroad," said Mr. Wills. "The ruined carriage you met was mine; the ruin before you is myself." And he entered upon another prolonged recital of his wrongs.

"Oh, no, you are not venerable enough for a ruin. Besides, who would have the heart to injure you!"

"That is what I should like to know, my dear lady; but I can assure you that I was very nearly killed."

"Kill you! Why, it is a hanging matter to kill a magistrate, and alas! no one ever kills a magistrate in Warwickshire."

"But the ruffian very nearly did. You see, it was in this way. I was——"

Lady Geste listened with sincere inattention. She was daringly draped, or rather undraped; and there was a suspicion of "make-up" about her long lashes. Beside white-haired, fat little Mr. Wills, quivering with excitement like a lukewarm jelly, she looked quite regal. The sequins on her black dress glittered and flashed in the lamplight, her magnificent bust and shoulders compelled the admiration of all beholders. She was as well dressed as a stage adventuress, and as full of self-revelation. Even for forty-five she looked a supremely beautiful woman, although there was perhaps a certain hardness about the somewhat set lines of the mouth and her face seemed almost too full for its classical contour; but she had the complexion of a girl of eighteen and the vigor of mature womanhood. Directly she entered the room she seized the attention of everyone in it, with the exception of Harry and Betty, who were too much engrossed with one another to be dominated by anyone else.

"Only four of us?" she asked, looking round the long, rambling room. "We shall talk one another to death before dinner is over. My dear Mrs. Anstruther, have you sent Betty away to escape the Machiavellian wiles of Mr. Wills? He has proposed to me so often that I am sure he ought to transfer his attentions to her. It seems

so selfish of me to monopolize him all the time. Do let me give him to Betty."

Mr. Wills looked immensely pleased. He had never before heard of Machiavelli, but fancied that he must be some distinguished friend of Lady Geste's—a foreigner probably—and he was rather proud of having been refused by so dazzling a woman.

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Anstruther. "Mr. Wills is harmless as far as Betty is concerned. I am more afraid of Sir Eustace than of him."

"Ah-h, then you needn't be afraid. Sir Eustace"—she regarded him with thinly veiled contempt—"is too well satisfied with himself to run any risk of letting a genuine devotion run away with him, whereas I am always giving the rein to my sensations and never know when to pull up. But where is—— Oh, how do you do, Betty? I have just offered to give you Mr. Wills, but your mother won't hear of it. Now I am reduced to weeping over his misadventures."

"To—ah—to be wept over by you, Lady Geste, would be the pleasantest of watery graves," simpered Mr. Wills.

"Now that's quite prettily said for such an elderly Lothario. Really, that motor-car has increased your gallantry instead of diminishing it; but think of your sufferings from lumbago during your last moments. Present your friend, Betty.

He rather reminds me of someone I—used to know long—ah-h!"

"Mr. Winchester—Lady Geste," said Betty.

As Harry came forward into the light Lady Geste suddenly dropped her fan, and Mr. Wills, in spite of his corpulency, fell on his knees to pick it up. "Rise, Sir Joseph," she said, playfully tapping him on the shoulder; and "Sir Joseph," becoming purple with delight, struggled to his feet. Though that puppy Carne was thirty years younger, he (Wills) could give him points.

Mother and son gazed into one another's faces as strangers meeting in the desert pause to find a friend or foe. She saw the puzzled look in the eyes so like her own. This was Winchester's revenge—to take her unawares. Would the boy remember her? Did he know anything? But no; there was no guile in that innocent face. It was impossible that he should know the truth. Even Winchester, madman as he was, would not have dared to tell him the truth. How handsome he was! The expression in his eyes was that of a startled deer. Winchester's revenge had overtaken her with frightful rapidity: she must either love the boy or hate him. His baby fingers again clutched her heart. But this gravely courteous, self-possessed lad could not be her son—the boy she had packed off to Canada with a couple of drunken emigrants who had taken him for a fifty-pound note, and had promised that he should never

return to trouble her. How had he escaped from Mahota? And where was Winchester? In one of the recesses of the room perhaps, enjoying his theatrical trick.

Her voice had a metallic ring in it as she affected to search her memory. "Winchester? Winchester? You *are* like my old friend, and yet I never even knew that he had married."

"No one else knew it either," said Mrs. Anstruther, pleased with the sensation Harry had produced. "Wasn't it clever of him to keep his secret all these years and then allow it to assume so pleasant a shape as this?"

"Ah, if only all one's youthful indiscretions were as presentable, one would not hesitate about being indiscreet," murmured Lady Geste, taking Sir Eustace's arm. "Nor would they be so carefully hidden—and for so long a time."

Betty, following with Harry, began to dislike Lady Geste: she took too great an interest in Harry at first sight. By dint of long brooding over the amazing story of Harry's career, Betty had arrived at the conviction that she was the person who had the greatest right to be interested in it. "You look pale," she said to Harry, as they entered the dining-room. "Aren't you well?"

Harry roused himself from his abstraction with an effort. He had never seen anyone like Lady Geste, and did not know whether he liked or dis-

liked her. When she flashed a radiant smile at him across the table, in spite of the hardness of her mouth, her eyes were the eyes of the Madonna he had painted and pinned on the wall of his cell. He told Betty as much, and Betty felt vaguely troubled, for she did not like Lady Geste, who generally treated her as if she were still in the schoolroom. If Lady Geste's face could have penetrated even to a Trappist monastery, it might also influence the young monk who had just come from one. But the whole thing was too impossible, and she put down the resemblance to Harry's imagination—an imagination which had been so inactive at Mahota that it was now virtually compelled to make up for lost time. After all, Lady Geste might have her counterpart in a monkish missal, although it seemed an exceedingly unlikely place in which to look for it.

Mr. Wills was the happiest person at the dinner table, for the shock of his recent adventures had rather accentuated his appetite; in addition, the servants looked at him with a curiosity which was not altogether reverent. The story of the accident had leaked out in the servants' hall, and everyone there knew whose motor-car had caused the mischief. But it was when the ladies had withdrawn and the men were left together, that Mr. Wills shone, although it grieved him to think that Harry drank water only. "A glass of good port," he said genially, "never yet hurt anyone; and Mrs.

Anstruther's port, unlike most ladies' wines, is everything it ought to be."

Sir Eustace made one or two sulky attempts to pass the decanters to Harry, and then relapsed into moody silence. It was rather an insult to so important a person as himself that he should be asked to meet this hybrid Canadian, who had not a word to say, and was as inaccessible as an oyster. Wills, of course, was an old fool; and it was like the duplicity of this unknown guest to pretend to be interested in so pompous a bore. There was a certain kindness of heart beneath the pomposity which attracted Harry, although it shocked him that so old a man should display such unfeigned devotion to the pleasures of the table. In the monastery, old age was reverend and revered; here, it was purply apoplectic, and scoffed at by the moody young baronet, who scarcely concealed his impatience to escape from Mr. Wills' prosy anecdotes about the astucity of the great unpaid, and openly told him that most magistrates were people who had nothing else to do, and ought to pay the country for the privilege of being allowed to administer injustice.

It was only when they rejoined the ladies that Sir Eustace's moodiness disappeared under the charm of Betty's voice, as she sat at the piano and sang ancient ballads of forsaken men and scornful maids. Sir Eustace looked at her with a proprietary air. Her happy, healthy English beauty

would serve as a foil to the exotic charm of Carne and attract half the people in the county. Still, at present the girl did not seem impressed by the honor he was about to do her. He would soon alter all that. When they were once formally engaged he would give her to understand that he did not appreciate her manner towards him; it had a lack of reverence which was incomprehensible in anyone who had been properly brought up, and must be changed accordingly. Meantime he would amuse himself with Lady Geste, who was always ready for a flirtation. Her full-blown beauty put everyone else in the shade.

But Lady Geste, as if divining his intention, rose swiftly from the couch where she had just refused Mr. Wills for the sixteenth time. "It would be the greatest cruelty to accept you," she smiled down upon him. "We are all creatures of habit, and you have become so accustomed to proposing to me after dinner that your vocation would be gone if I were unkind enough to marry you. You would have to go somewhere else to spend your evenings!"

Under cover of Mr. Wills' confusion she nodded to Mrs. Anstruther. "I am going to talk to your young recluse from the backwoods;" and glided across the room to where Harry sat in the shadow of the armored knight.

The subtle perfume of her presence made him look up. He did not know how cruel and heart-

less she could be. He only felt that the hardness had momentarily relaxed when she looked down upon him; that she had smiled almost tenderly; and that now she had come to seek him out and talk to him.

"No, no; don't get up, please," she said, and sank down beside him as she put her handkerchief to her lips and turned her beautiful eyes upon him with a curious expression. "I have been looking at you since you re-entered the drawing-room, and you have the abstracted expression of an anchorite. Do all young men so soon grow old in Canada?"

He smiled gratefully back at her. "I don't know. Are all young Englishwomen as beautiful as Miss Anstruther?"

"Certainly not," she said, almost sharply; "but how do you know that she is beautiful?"

"I feel it. My father feels it."

"Haven't your experiences been as limited as his have been extensive? At least, I am given to understand so."

"Oh, no," he said, full of worldly wisdom. "My father does not like English society; but I do. And I seem to have had so many experiences. The countess was very kind to me, but you don't know her."

"No; I have not that honor. When did you meet her? On the ship coming home?"

"Yes, on the ship coming home."

"Of course you lost your heart to her?"

The lad looked surprised. "Lost my heart! I did not know I had one."

"Then how did you come to know so much about her?"

"My father said that she was a necessary experience, although it would be useless to pray for her."

"Ah! pray for her! This is interesting. Then she must have said or done something which necessitated your prayers?"

The lad hesitated. "She was very kind to me."

"And do you think that I come in the same category?"

"Oh, no. Besides, I have often prayed *to* you."

"Mr. Winchester!" She was genuinely shocked. For so unmoral a woman, her religious views were extremely strict. She would much rather have been sworn at than prayed to.

"It is because you have the face of the Madonna," he explained. "I dreamed the Madonna came to me at the monastery, and so I painted her face."

"Ah, even in a monastery a woman's face cannot be kept out. Where did you get your Madonna face?"

"It was yours. I dreamt it, and it came."

"I did not know," she smiled, "that you had time to dream in a monastery. It is curious that you should have dreamed of a face you had never

even seen." She looked at him sharply. "How do you account for it?"

"I cannot account for it. God sent your face to me in my dream."

"You think it was God; it might have been the devil."

He would not argue the point. "It was God," he said simply. "That is all I know about it."

"Ah, well, we will suppose so, then. Where is this painting?"

"In the monastery."

"I am disappointed." She breathed more freely. He knew nothing—absolutely nothing. But what was Winchester's motive in bringing them together? How handsome the boy was, with what dignity he carried himself! He had just the same turn of throat and chin as her own, and his complexion was better than hers: it had never been painted. This was the boy she had consigned to the mercy of two drunken reprobates with as little compunction as if he had been a superfluous kitten to drown. The situation was dangerous, but it was almost amusing; and, to her surprise, she liked Harry. As a rule, she liked so few people, and was so easily bored. But if he knew who she was, he would curse her and tell her to leave him. Was it part of Winchester's revenge that she should grow fond of the boy? Perhaps he meant to wait until the mother's heart awoke in her and then take Harry away and hide him in some remote corner

of the earth where she could never see him again. Very well; if her mother's heart troubled her overmuch, there were always plenty of detectives who would find the boy when she wanted him: nowaday no one could utterly disappear. It was only a question of time and money. But the mere idea that she was not to have her own way in this, as in everything else, irritated her, and she immediately decided that she wanted to see a good deal of the boy and find out what he was like—whether there was anything waking to life beneath this quiet surface. Acting on the impulse of the moment, she drew a quaint old ring from her finger. "We are going to be great friends," she said, smiling down upon him with irresistible sweetness. For once in her life she was giving way to a genuine impulse. "Now, let me put this ring on your finger as a token. Promise never to part with it. You know," she glanced involuntarily towards Betty, "I am old enough to be your mother;" and with reckless generosity she thrust the great graven emerald upon his forefinger.

Carne, who saw her do it, was inwardly furious. Though he meant to marry Betty some day, he admired Lady Geste, and his dislike to Harry grew by leaps and bounds. He resolved to break up this *tête-à-tête,* and strolled across the room towards them. "Can I give you a lift in my motor?" he asked, addressing Lady Geste.

She smiled sweetly up at him. "Thanks, no.

It's too compromising. I distrust that motor of yours: like you, it is too impulsive."

"Too impulsive!" He frowned down at her in furious anger.

"Yes, too impulsive. It is difficult to keep you both in the narrow way. Besides, my carriage is waiting; it is less speedy and less open—to criticism." She beckoned to Harry. "Miss Anstruther has promised to bring you over to-morrow to lunch." Then she turned to the adoring Wills. "Good-night. Mind you come and propose to me again next week; I always feel so lonely when you miss a week. You are so—so becomingly fervent. Be sure you bring Mr. Winchester to-morrow, Betty. That 'Reverie Interrompue' of Tschaikowsky's is almost as sweet as you are;" and, with a few further words to Mrs. Anstruther, she moved towards the door.

Carne, determined not to be repulsed, sprang forward to take her down.

"What is the man thinking of! I could not dream of tearing you away from such pleasant surroundings." There was a look in her eyes which deterred Sir Eustace in spite of himself. "Mr. Winchester?" She paused expectantly.

Harry led her from the room. Bereft of Lady Geste's invigorating presence, Mr. Wills, drooping like a thirsty flower, soon took his leave, after unwisely accepting Sir Eustace's offer to give him a lift in the motor car. He said afterwards, when

confiding his woes to Mrs. Anstruther, that nothing would ever again induce him to entrust himself to a vehicle which had not yet decided whether it belonged to heaven or earth, but whose every tendency was irreclaimably vicious.

When they had all gone, Betty, her mother, and Harry sat together for an hour in Mrs. Anstruther's boudoir—a fairy-like room which had once been the prison of a celebrated traitor. In compliance with Harry's request, Betty went to a cottage piano which made no attempt to disguise its age, but was frankly modern. She sang of the cruelty of one Barbara Allen, a moving lament which further enlarged Harry's experience, for he had not known that even the fairest and sweetest maids can sometimes be very cruel. When the singing was done, and the storm predicted by the peacock had died away, they said good-night, and Harry on going back to his room opened the box which contained his monastic robe. But he did not put it on, as he had done nearly every night since his arrival in England. The shining emerald on his finger directed his thoughts elsewhere. He sat late, and, when he did go to bed, slept heavily, dreaming sometimes of the Madonna, sometimes of Carne's pimply face with its unpleasant sneer. Then Parsons came to call him, and he remembered that he was going to breakfast with Betty.

CHAPTER XII

WINCHESTER COMES TO GESTE

A FORTNIGHT after Mrs. Anstruther's dinner-party Lady Geste came in from the garden and sat down at her writing-table. During that fortnight she had seen Harry at least a dozen times, and on every occasion had acted as the quickest of stimulants to his dormant perceptive faculties. Of course he grew very fond of her. When he was at a loss how to express an idea she was generally at his elbow with a lightning-like phrase which crystallized it forever in his somewhat slow brain. And she reorganized his theory of the division of time by showing him that this world certainly demanded a proportionate amount of it. In short, she continually amused herself by setting snares for Harry, and then, when he tumbled into them, as was invariably the case, showed him a way of escape. The process was so engrossing, like most of her whims while they lasted, that she became perfectly devoted to Harry and would have given everything she possessed for a kind word or a smile from him. In short, to her own amazement, she developed the maternal passion, and kept Betty on tenterhooks. His mother and

Betty between them were rapidly curing Harry of his belief in the world's wickedness. The world could not be wicked when it contained such good people, and so, with their assistance, he devoted most of his time to increasing his knowledge of it—an occupation which caused his daily letters to Winchester to grow longer and longer as fresh marvels forced themselves on his bewildered attention.

On this particular morning Lady Geste sat aimlessly at her writing-table, then leaned back, fidgeting with her pen. Seized by a sudden inspiration, she at last drew a blotter towards her, and began to write. "Yes, I'd better write to Winchester; it will be wiser to plunge into the middle of things at once," she said with characteristic decision. "I used to write to him at one time without any difficulty. Besides, there's nothing so hard to believe as an explanation. It always looks so like a lie on the face of it, and one knows instinctively that it is given to hide something else. No; I don't think I'll explain anything. How could I? Some men will believe anything; Winchester (I never knew such a man—he always went to extremes) believes nothing—especially if it comes from me. Dear me, how prejudiced against me the man is!" She laughed. "All because of that little peccadillo of ours, that wild, mad plunge of our youth when we loved one another not wisely but too well. I must have loved him or I should never have

carried him off his feet like that. But he has no romance in him, or would never have wanted to cover up things under a matrimonial cloak and make them respectable. Respectable! What a price people pay for respectability! No one would imagine that as a young woman I was—well, scarcely respectable; but, after all, it was more curiosity than anything else. No one can consistently call me a bad woman. Some people's moral sense develops later than others'; and I was always late in my young days. After all, I only wanted to do the best I could for myself and Winchester, though he wouldn't believe it at the time. If I had married him, it would have meant ruin for both of us; and just see how comfortably off we are now. Perhaps, in his heart, he is tired of being angry with me, and wants me to do something for Harry—our son!"

Lady Geste got up from the table and began to walk about the room with long, sweeping strides. She caught sight of her reflection in a mirror, and nodded to herself in it with light-hearted gayety. "Did I really make that mad plunge? Oh, no, it must have been someone else. It seems such ages ago, and I did so want the luxuries of life. His people would never have forgiven him for marrying me, and I knew that well enough, although he pretended it did not matter. It would have mattered later had I been such a fool. Besides, my father would have rather seen me in my grave than

married to a guardsman. Now, I have so many luxuries that I don't seem to care about them. A little wholesome starvation would do me all the good in the world: I am growing rather redundant. To marry Winchester, after we had found each other out, would have been—bathos! Cynical wretch, why couldn't he have married someone else and have continued to worship me from afar! If I had listened to him we should have both been as poor as church mice, and no one was ever the wiser about our midsummer madness except ourselves. Aye, poor wretch, he really did love me once, and I loved him as much as I loved anyone. But it is different with this boy. I'd go through fire and water for him, die for him, if need be. I'll show him what a mother's love can do even though I am a bad woman."

She again glanced at her beautiful face and figure in the mirror. "But I'm not really bad—not really.

"'In her first passion, woman loves her lover!'

True enough; but love won't pay milliner's bills and make one comfortable. Now, poor old Sir John, although a bore, did make me very comfortable—more comfortable than I made him—and it seemed to give him positive pleasure to pay my bills. But then I have a genius for making people uncomfortable; and what's the use of having a genius for anything if you don't make use of it!

Pshaw! I suppose Winchester hates me because I behaved so cruelly to the boy. Well, I didn't know enough about life then to know that I ought to love him. The maternal instinct was dormant. I wanted to get the child out of my sight as quickly as possible; and when I did try to trace him he was safe in the monastery and it seemed wiser to leave him there. If he had remained in England the danger of discovery would have hung over me like that unpleasant sword people always mention in quotations. Winchester is to blame, too. He shouldn't have been tragic about the affair. I didn't want the boy. He was too like me in appearance: people would have seen the resemblance; they might do so now if they had any eyes; he has all the beauty I have lost. And it is just as dangerous as ever to have him here. If that reptile of a Carne were to quarrel with me, he'd be certain to make mischief, for I often see him looking first at Harry and then at me as if to be quite sure of some resemblance between us. Once he grasps that he'll begin to make inquiries. Now, I wonder why Winchester hit upon this scheme? Probably to annoy me. He was always a good hater. Of course, the boy did not come to Antholin by chance. Winchester was aware that the Anstruthers were my nearest neighbors, and found out that I knew them and should be down here this year. I see it all now. He must have loved me once, or he wouldn't take all this trouble to make me uncom-

fortable now. I never knew such a fantastic and ill-natured being. And all because I could not marry him when such a marriage would have ruined us both. Of course, afterwards, I couldn't marry him. The man suddenly developed a conscience; he always had a weakness for luxuries!"

She sat down and thoughtfully rested her chin upon her hand. "I have it; I have it. He thought I should like to get Harry, and that he would then take him away just to make me uncomfortable. Decidedly, Winchester is a very annoying, melodramatic, sulky sort of personage. Mothers don't care for their sons as much as all that: self-preservation—people call me very well preserved—is the first law of maternity. Well, yes; I do like the boy. I suppose it must be what novelists call 'the maternal instinct'—a thing I had never even heard of. Why was I such an idiot? Ah me! Ah me! But there was a flavor about life then which Winchester and I haven't found since. This pretty shamefaced fool of a boy has such sweet, grave, innocent eyes that it is wicked to kill the monk in him; but it will be killed sooner or later, there is no doubt about that. Even a monk can't go on eating vegetables after his salad days are over. Besides, Harry is falling in love with Betty; he doesn't know it, but Betty does; and he worships me in a reverent way that is rather embarrassing for me to live up to. I can't tell him that I'm just the sort of person he ought not to

know, when he thinks I'm a Madonna. Guinevere is much nearer the mark. I rather fancy," she glanced again at the mirror, "I am growing old. Crow's-feet will soon come, and wrinkles, and a permanent collar bone and high dresses, and all that sort of thing; and I shall have to think of my soul and prepare for the next world. I hate people who are always preparing for the next world; it shows such a dissatisfied disposition, as if they didn't like the accommodation in this. Oh, dear, dear, dear, what a pother it all is? Here was I, sinking gracefully into the grave, and quite a personage in the county. Then Nemesis, in the shape of Winchester, overtakes me, insists on being regarded seriously, and keeps me awake. If Winchester isn't careful I'll tell the boy who I am. But no; he'd die of shame. That won't do. I can't have my boy being ashamed of me. He thinks, with the exception of Betty, I'm the most beautiful woman in the world. I've quite made him forget this unknown countess—which is a triumph in its way. I suppose I sha'n't be able to get off to Scotland with this affair hanging over me. Not that it will be much of a disappointment; these shooting men are all alike—their conversational methods resemble their shooting. If they miss with one barrel, they always try to bring you down with the other."

She went back to the writing-table and sat down again. "Dear me," she said, with a mirthful

light in her fine eyes, "I suppose I must be serious in spite of myself. That is the worst of having been a vicar's daughter. When I give blankets away to the poor I can't divest myself of the idea that I am wrapping up my own past shortcomings in them. And it is such a fine morning! One can always repent in wet weather; it makes such an appropriate background. Those children will be riding over presently. How well Harry rides! I mean to give him a horse, just to see those grave eyes of his open wide with pleasure and delight. He"—she laughed again—"really is a great improvement on that wretch of a father of his; he believes in all women, and his father doesn't believe in any. Pity I can't persuade Winchester to go into a monastery and contemplate us afar off in a more dispassionate way: a woman always gains by being looked at from a distance—especially after she is thirty. Winchester always was obstinate. Now, he thinks I'm a female villain, whereas I'm only a poor human woman who, in a moment of madness, has dared to do what so many men do every day and forget as quickly. Of course I wish I hadn't been such a fool. There's sure to be someone turn up some day and find out all about it, and then, where shall I be? But I must write the letter and get it over. Let me see! Let me see! How shall I begin? 'Dear Mr. Winchester'? No, that will not do, although he has been decidedly dear. Never mind; it is as good a beginning as

anything else. What a waste of time it is on a morning like this to be bothering about the peccadilloes of one's youth; and it was all so long ago, too! That's the worst of it. Now, then, for my letter. It will have to be 'Dear Mr. Winchester', the sulky wretch!"

She took up her pen again and wrote rapidly:

"DEAR MR. WINCHESTER: It is so long since I have had the pleasure of seeing you, that I shall be delighted if you will run down to the Hall for a few days and join my house-party. In addition to the charm of meeting you again, there are several little matters on which I wish to ask your advice. You can see how much I am improving, for in the old days you know very well that I never thought of asking advice from anyone. But I am growing venerable (my maid showed me several gray hairs this morning), and devout, and 'making my soul' (people talk of making their souls nowadays just as they used to do of making their beds), and all that sort of thing. Do come down and help me; it would be such a pleasure to be sure of our meeting again in another and a better world, although, giddy wretch that I am, I find this one quite too charming to leave sooner than I can help. Sometimes you were, accidentally of course, quite nice in the old days when you did not take such gloomy views of life. Now, let us return to the old days, and come down and be nice to me, and forget all

about your absurd plans for making me uncomfortable through this delightful boy. He resembles you so much that I can't help liking him. To talk to him is like picking primroses, or eating bread and jam, or anything else that is unworldly and idyllic.

There is a very good train which will reach here about five, and if you send me a wire I will have you met at the station. If you don't come to me, of course I shall have to come to you: and town must be such a bore this weather. Besides, my roses, like myself, are just beginning their second life, although they are not nearly so full-blown as their mistress. Come and see both for yourself, and, believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"GWENDOLEN GESTE."

"'Yours sincerely' will do very well," she mused, as she folded the letter, put it in an envelope, and addressed it. "Of course he knows I am nothing of the sort; but then, he cannot help himself. I wonder if he will remember that in the old days I invariably had my own way. He won't like to remember that; no man ever does. It is not likely that I still have a particle of influence over him; and yet it must be so, or he would never have planned this elaborate scheme of confronting me with Harry. Besides, I shall make him show his hand. I believe I could really get him to marry

me, after all, if I wanted him to do it. Then we could settle down as comfortably as two hedgehogs, forget the eccentricities of our early youth—what would youth be without its eccentricities!—and live through an uneventful old age until Harry was strong enough to run alone."

She tapped her smooth forehead thoughtfully with the end of her pen. "What is the reason that I am interested in the boy! Is it because so bad a woman as myself has so good a son? I did not deserve to have him, I did not want him, yet here he is thinking me everything that's delightful. Well, I must not undeceive him, poor fellow. I will be delightful—to him."

Someone knocked at the door, but she did not hear.

"I don't suppose I really am a bit worse than heaps of other people who have outwardly respected the conventionalities. Besides, there is always the crowning virtue of not having been found out. I had to do something disreputable as a moral protest against having been born a vicar's daughter. The very atmosphere made me long to kick over the traces, and so—well, I kicked pretty high. Every man sows his wild oats as a matter of course. Why shouldn't a woman also indulge in similar agricultural pursuits? I hate such pharisaism. If it is wrong for a woman to follow her bent, it is equally wrong for a man; and not all the talking in the world can alter the fact

that in modern civilization there's one law for the woman and another for the man. Moral: If you are a woman, don't get found out."

The footman opened the door. "Mr. Winchester, my lady."

Lady Geste rose, letter in hand. "Ah, Mr. Winchester! So glad you are able to ride over. I have just been studying moral problems, and they are a little too much for me. Why, where is Miss Anstruther?"

"She stopped at the Lodge gates for a few minutes, and asked me to come on," said Harry, looking very handsome in his well-cut riding things. "There was someone she wanted to inquire about."

"Oh, yes, a new baby at the Lodge; she always insists on seeing the new babies. There generally is a new baby when she comes back from town. Mrs. Smith's annuals, the vicar calls them. James, see that this letter goes at once."

"Yes, my lady."

She gave the letter to the footman. "Shall we wait here for Miss Anstruther? Won't you sit down?"

Harry sat down; so did Lady Geste. In the subdued light of the gay little morning-room she looked handsomer than ever. There was a pause as she toyed with a paper-cutter. "I have written to ask your father to come to Geste for a few days."

Harry was delighted, and thanked her warmly.

"But I don't know whether he will come; in fact, I'm rather afraid he will not."

His countenance fell.

"You see, we had a little misunderstanding some years ago, and when old friends fall out——!" She paused significantly.

"Can I do anything to put it right? Can you tell me what it is about? I have told him so much about you in my letters. They are full of you."

She smiled. "No; you are the last person in the world to be told the cause of our quarrel. But you might add your entreaties to mine to get him to come here. Of course there will be a house-party."

"With pleasure."

"There is no time like the present." She pushed a blotter towards him.

Harry obediently selected a pen. "What shall I say?" He smiled up at her. "When do you want him to come? Do you know, I feel as if I must see him soon."

"So you shall. What do I want you to say to him?" She moved round the table and put a caressing hand on his shoulder. "Oh, say, 'My dear father.' That is how a boy usually writes to his father."

"'My dear father.' Yes, I've got that. What next?"

"'That tiresome old woman, Lady Geste——'"

"'That tiresome old——'" He put down the pen. "But you are not old and you are not tiresome. You are kindness itself."

"You think so? Every boy always begins by admiring a woman old enough to be his mother; and you don't know how tiresome I can be when I try. Some day I will show you."

He smiled up at her again. "Try!"

She smiled down, and for the moment their faces were strangely alike. "But we are forgetting your father. Tell him you want him to come. You do want him to come, don't you?"

"Of course I do. I am lost without him."

She experienced a jealous pang. "But if he says hard things of me to you when he does come, what will you do then?"

"He will not say them. He is good to everyone I like."

"Then you like me? Why?"

"I don't know. I never think about it. I only know that it is so."

"You are frank, at any rate. At one time I was considered rather good-looking; but that was long ago."

He gazed at her with grave eyes. "Oh, it isn't because of that. I should be just as fond of you if you were quite—quite ugly. I seem to have known you always. I have a curious feeling when you come into a room that you have never really been a stranger to me, that I have seen you before

somewhere, although I cannot remember when or where."

"It must have been in your dream in the monastery. Did you not have to do penance for it? Was it—was it altogether a dream?"

"Yes, it must have been. How could I know you in any other way?"

"Of course not. How absurd of me!"

She still kept her hand on his shoulder as he began to write in beautiful Greek characters. "Where had we got to?"

"Oh, I have nearly finished. 'My dear father, I am continuing your friendship for Lady Geste. She thinks that if you will not come to see her, you will come to see me, and, so, that I shall bring you to her. Please come and be brought to her. She is so sweet and good to me, and has given me a beautiful ring because she and you are old friends. That is why she likes me, for your sake. Please come and like her again for mine. I hope you will allow me to keep the ring.'"

"And if he will not?"

"Oh, but he will; he is the kindest of men. There will not be an 'if not'."

"You think so?"

"Yes; he nearly always does all I ask of him."

"But," she persisted, "if you wanted something very much and your father would not let you have it, what would you do then?"

"I should obey him and go without it."

"Even if you wanted it very badly?"

"Even if I wanted it very badly. That would not make any difference."

"Ah, it is easy to tell that you have been a monk, for you go out of your way to give up the things you want most, and have all the vices of your virtues." There was a ring of disappointment in her voice. She expected he would give up even Winchester if she wanted him to do so.

"Have I?" A smile flitted across his face, as he looked down at his riding-breeches. "There are so many of me," he naïvely declared, "that it is not easy to decide which is really myself. Now, in the monastery I was always 'Brother Colombe,' morning, noon, and night, and I knew what was expected from 'Brother Colombe'; but there are so many Harry Winchesters that it is impossible to know what is expected from them."

"And are you sorry you left the monastery, where life was not nearly so complex?"

He picked up an envelope. "No, for I am so happy in the world. It is as if a weight were lifted from my heart. Sometimes I fear it cannot last—that something will take my father from me. It is my father who watches over me, who tells me what to do, who finds friends for me, who teaches me everything."

She willfully affected to misunderstand him. "But suppose there comes a time when you do not

want to do as he wishes, when your wills clash! What will you do then?"

"I shall obey him, as I said just now," he persisted. "Is there anything else you wish me to add to this letter?"

"No; I think not. Ah, here comes Betty. Now let us go and sit among the roses. I wonder whether you are as intractable with her as you are with me. No, no, it's useless protesting. I know men too well. But if I say anything more, Betty will fly to your help, and I am no match for the pair of you."

This letter was also sent off. Winchester received them both by the same post, and smiled grimly when he read them. "We are turning out the most commonplace couple, after all," he said impatiently. "She knows who he is, and cannot resist him any more than I can. The fonder she gets of him the better. Confound it, why didn't I leave the lad in his monastery? I'm restless without him. Of course, there's Betty. That's awkward. But no; he is not of her world. Why, he'd think it a deadly sin to fall in love. I wanted her to waken his intellect, not fall in love with him; at any rate, not just yet. I have much to do, and my time is short. Besides, if she has taken such a fancy to Harry, Lady Geste will keep him away from Betty. Still, it is not fair to Betty. Wonder whether her mother wants her to marry Carne, howling cad though he is. I seem to have

heard something about it. The fellow is always at Antholin when they're down there."

As a result of his cogitations, he decided to go to Geste in spite of the awkwardness of such a meeting. He still wanted to make Lady Geste suffer as much as he had suffered in the old days, although he doubted her capacity for acute feeling. Had she not robbed him of the child through sheer wanton caprice and wickedness, just because he had been fond of it? He knew how good looks attracted her, that she must sometimes feel lonely at Geste until she resolved to marry again. In fact, her whole career had been a triumphant striding over the bodies of mankind. Still, in the course of her matrimonial vicissitudes she had remained a childless woman; surely she must have some human feeling left, even if it did not amount to very much! He would go to Geste and find out what she wanted.

But when he reached Geste the situation became increasingly difficult as far as its owner was concerned, for it was evident that she took a great interest in Harry—an interest which, she explained to him, was on account of his likeness to his father. It was a little unreasonable, however, to account for it in this way, when every onlooker could not fail to be aware that Winchester himself possessed not the smallest particle of attraction for her. Indeed, for so fearless a woman she seemed a little afraid of him, and hesitated to express herself

with her customary picturesque vigor in his presence.

On the other hand, Winchester began to wish that he had never allowed Harry to go to Antholin. In the beginning of things he had intended to humble Lady Geste. Now he could not do so, without involving others, without causing the innocent to suffer as well as the guilty. He had not allowed for the natural influences of heredity, nor, indeed, had he supposed that Harry would assimilate all that was going on around him, so quickly conform to the usages of the society in which he found himself. As a result of this internal struggle, Winchester went about Geste with an air of armed neutrality, conscious that his hostess was also preparing for the inevitable war between them. He knew her well enough to be aware that she regarded any opposition to her will as preposterous. All her life she had been accustomed to have her wishes obeyed as soon as they were formulated. That she had not always formulated them with sufficient clearness to insure their being carried out in their entirety, was due to the vehement impatience of contradiction which often defeated her dearest desires. Winchester knew well enough that in this instance she would make her meaning amply clear. She was evidently afraid of him, and wanted to come to terms about Harry.

CHAPTER XIII

"THE SNIVELING MONK"

HARRY was delighted to find that his father had consented to come to Geste, and greeted him with an affectionate enthusiasm which pleased Winchester more than he cared to show. As his hold on life began to weaken, Winchester regretted it acutely, and it had cost him a good deal more than he cared to admit when circumstances made it necessary that he should send Harry to Antholin. Harry, too, in spite of his monastic training and the attractions of Antholin, longed for his father's presence—that father who was so wise and yet so unhappy. Besides, with all the inexperience of youth, he felt that he could easily straighten out the misunderstanding between two such old friends as Lady Geste and Winchester, and told Betty that he was rapidly beginning to look upon Lady Geste as a combination of Madonna and mother in one. Whereupon Betty retorted that Lady Geste was much too youthful and handsome to be anybody's mother and that her features were altogether different from the Madonna type—a somewhat illogical reply, but one which appeared to give her intense satis-

faction when Harry gravely declared that as Lady Geste was a contemporary of his father's, she could not by any possibility be as youthful as Betty imagined.

"That is just what I wanted you to discover," was Betty's still more illogical, and, for her, ill-natured answer. "One never knows what is going on in that quiet mind of yours, and I wanted to find out for myself. You are always surprising me, although you don't want me to be a mother to you."

For once in her life Betty found his simplicity irritating. She came to the conclusion that even Sir Galahad would have been improved by a slight admixture of humor. Then she grew ashamed of herself and turned in the saddle, and

> "Sent the deathless passion in her eyes
> Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
> On him, and he believed in her belief."

They were riding back at a walking pace from Geste, and were in no hurry. As long as they rode together there did not appear to be any reason to hasten along the pleasant lanes where the deepening tints of the oaks marked the quickly approaching time, when

> "Yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
> Bare, ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

A solitary robin in an elm twittered his cheerful song with a generosity which fell on heedless ears,

whilst the occasional "plop-plop" of a horse-chestnut on the hard road made them pause to look upon the shining mahogany of the ripe fruit as it rolled from its spiny shell.

Harry involuntarily stopped his horse. Impulsive Lady Geste had given him a pure-blooded gray Arab which looked strangely out of place in an English lane. "To dock a horse's tail," said Lady Geste (she had occasional intervals of common sense) when giving Harry the horse, "is as wicked as cutting off a woman's hair; and you, with your dreamy, clear-cut features, and feminine eyes, would look absurd upon a heavy English horse with a docked tail. Now, Betty looks well on anything; but I have given her the bay mare because the two are stable companions and miss each other when they are parted. They can talk to one another—it's all pure nonsense to say that horses can't talk—of the desert sands as they sink fetlock deep in these stodgy English lanes; and that will give you both an opportunity of talking about them, too, if you can think of nothing else."

The mare stopped also, and softly rubbed her nose against the velvet muzzle of Harry's horse. They made a handsome quartette.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Betty, watching the sunlight on the gray's satin skin. "You've already escaped from England again. Why do you always yearn for Mahota?"

Harry peered through the brown leaves of the

beech hedge, down a narrow valley, the sides of which were covered with dense thickets. "Don't you see Brother Aloysius—a little tired and limping with his left leg—coming through the undergrowth with an armful of cabbages? It's just like the monastery grounds with that millstream flowing through the center, only the rabbits there are shut up in square inclosures and are of all colors, until they are skinned for the market—then, poor things, they are alike. Here they are as gray as the wintry skies my father speaks about. Brother Aloysius always hated to kill the rabbits, and at last the Abbot got a farmhand to do it."

"No, I do not see Brother Aloysius or Brother Anybody Else either," said Betty, with decision. "Besides, it isn't very polite when you are riding with anyone suddenly to gallop off three thousand miles just because an English rabbit reminds you of an equally uninteresting Canadian one." There was a ring of genuine vexation in her voice, and he was quick to detect it. The groom, at a respectful distance, wondered inwardly why they wanted to look at "a lot of bloomin' rabbits" when there was no chance of getting near enough to shoot any.

"I beg your pardon; I'll gallop back to England again," he said, as they turned their horses' heads and rode on, Betty thinking deeply.

"How long will it take you to forget all about the monastery?" she asked presently.

Harry smiled. "Why?"

"Because it seems to be the whole of your life. You compare everything with it, and have no other standard of comparison. We cannot all hope to be as perfect as Brother Aloysius—even though we don't limp on one leg. I did not know that monastic life had such charm for you. It would seem a dreary enough business to most people."

"It was the whole of my life until my father took me away from it. Now I am forgetting it and its teachings—far too rapidly. Only yesterday I fell into a——" He stopped short.

Betty laughed gleefully. "Oh, but this is really delightful. Tell me, tell me, now. You don't mean to say that you've been doing something that just an ordinary wicked, worldly young man would do? Please tell me."

"Yes, I did." He flushed crimson and set his teeth hard until he looked very like his father.

Betty was thoroughly delighted. "I know it is wicked of me to say it, but that is the most wholesome thing I have heard of you yet. Somebody has smitten you on the right cheek, and you——?" She paused inquiringly. "Don't say you turned to him the left! If you turned to him the left, I will never forgive you. Of course it's wrong and I'm only a girl, but if I were a man I'd never be twice smitten, at any rate not by the same man."

"I did not turn to him the left. Someone called me a 'sniveling monk', and I—I——!"

"What! You didn't—snivel!" She brought out the obnoxious word with a visible effort. "Did you strike him?" In her eagerness she drew closer to him. "Did you strike him?"

"I'm afraid so." He pulled off his buckskin glove and showed inflamed knuckles. "As your stable boy says, 'I let out with my left'."

"Who was it?"

"I don't want to say."

"Anybody I know?"

"I don't want to say. A monk should hold his tongue about such things. It was disgraceful of me."

"Oh, but you are not a monk now, and I know already. Was it—" Betty's voice sank to a thrilling whisper—"was it Sir Eustace?"

"I'd rather you didn't ask me who it was. I apologized for my anger, and the offender consigned my apologies to perdition. He seemed to think they were inadequate."

Betty's eyes began to dance. "Then I am sure it must have been about me! Did he object to your riding with me? Don't hesitate. I have a right to know." There was a world of scorn in her eyes as she thought of Carne's presuming to dictate to anyone about her choice of a companion.

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not say what it was about; it doesn't seem quite fair. I was wrong to strike him—especially as I am much stronger than he is. But I had never met a man like that

before, and, in the excitement of the moment, it was the only thing I could think of. Brother Colombe would not have done it."

"No, but Harry Winchester was quite justified. At any rate, it wasn't you who did the—sniveling."

"No," said Harry, stroking his horse's mane; "I did not do the sniveling, although it seems the hardest thing to do when you get out in the world; it is so much easier to knock a man down than to—to snivel. If he had come to me at the monastery, I should have sniveled; but the worst of it is, I can't feel really sorry for having struck him; and yet, I did not want to hurt him."

"That is really 'The way to acquire Merit', as Kipling's old Llama says. "If you'd rather not tell me, I don't want to hear any more."

"No; I don't think it's fair. Besides, I did not know that he took so much interest in all your movements."

"He has not the slightest right to take any interest in my movements at all. Mamma rather likes him, but I do not, although I have tried to hide my dislike," said Betty proudly. "Perhaps I had better get mamma to ride with us in future."

"Why? Cannot I take care of you?"

Such simplicity was too much for Betty. "Oh, if you don't know, I don't either!" she said, and rode on in silence. She knew instinctively that Carne had tried to bully the "sniveling monk," and that the "sniveling monk" had declined to be

bullied. "Really," Betty reflected, as she put her mare into a canter, "human nature is human nature all the world over, notwithstanding the chastening influences of monasticism. I wonder what he would have done to Sir Eustace if he had never been brought up in a monastery. Half-killed him, most likely. And he takes it all in such a matter-of-fact way, as if he were accustomed to knocking down interfering baronets. I should like to see him really roused. By the way, I had quite forgotten that Sir Eustace dines with us to-night; it will be rather awkward."

She cantered on, and left the gray behind her. "Ah-h! This is worth more than Mahota. Look at that floating cloud, the shadow of a bird flying, the deer trooping through the undergrowth. No, I was not meant to lead the silent life. The dear God made all this beauty to be enjoyed by His creatures, and I love it—love every blade of grass, every twig and tree and flower. Oh, the dear, sweet world! The dear sweet world to gallop through and glory in!"

She drew rein and waited until Harry caught her up. "Excuse my running away from you like that, but I wanted to think. Lady Geste, your father, and Sir Eustace dine at Antholin to-night."

"How can a man with a black eye go out to dinner?" thought Harry. Fortunately, he did not say it. "Will it make him uncomfortable?" he

asked anxiously. "I can stay in my room if you think it will make him uncomfortable."

"Not more uncomfortable than you appear to have made him already. Perhaps he will have the good sense not to come. If he does come, he must put up with the consequences. Of course I must tell mamma about this."

"I don't think it would be fair," said Harry. "I did not intend to tell anyone until——"

"Until I worried it out of you. Perhaps you are right. But if he had given you a black eye, all the world would have known it."

"But he hasn't."

"No, but he probably would have done so had you—sniveled!" retorted Betty; and they galloped back to Antholin at a pace which filled the groom with dismay.

When Carne appeared at dinner that evening he was indifferently impolite to Harry, and his small pimply face looked very much as usual. It was not until Betty instituted a vigorous search that she discovered the baronet's right eye was painted and slightly puffy. "He must have been holding a raw beefsteak on it until it was nearly time to start, and then got the chemist to paint it for him," she whispered to Harry, under cover of her fan; for when Carne lounged in with his customary superciliousness, Harry felt that he must have been dreaming. Nothing but a glance at his own bruised knuckles convinced him that he had really

knocked Carne down. It was not an exploit to be proud of, and he was glad that no outward sign of it remained on the baronet's face to reprove his sinful pugnacity. And Mahota was so far away that even Harry's exacting conscience could not carry such a distance. Should they hear of it, he pictured the gray-headed Fathers mutely shaking their heads over his delinquencies, and feeling that he ought to be punished for having left Mahota. As Harry ate his dinner (his appetite daily improved) he came to the conclusion that in spite of all that is written and said on the subject, pugnacity is more a matter of meat than of morals.

Carne was almost ostentatiously attentive to Betty, as if to demonstrate to the world in general that he did not even condescend to imagine there could by any possibility exist a being presumptuous enough to cross his path. Unfortunately, a twitch or two in his painted eye unpleasantly reminded him that Harry had refused to submit to any dictation on such a subject. And if he needed another reminder, he could not help seeing the inflamed knuckles of Harry's strong left hand. This shaveling savage (he wished he had thought of the term before; on reflection, it sounded more opprobrious than "sniveling monk") had not even the decency to wear a glove, but must flaunt his flaming knuckles in everyone's face.

"You look as if you had hit your hand against something," said Mrs. Anstruther to Harry, when

the gentlemen, after a somewhat trying interval to themselves, came into the drawing-room. Winchester, seeing that there was something wrong between Harry and Carne, and that the latter meant mischief provided the opportunity offered, was keenly on the alert. Here was a new danger to be guarded against. From time to time he glanced at Harry to see how the lad took Carne's evident insolence; but beyond a slightly heightened color and a disposition to talk a little more than usual, Harry made no sign. Winchester felt reassured, and yet there was a look in Carne's eye which he did not like. It was also evident that Carne was studying what particular form his animosity should take. When he presently alluded to the strong likeness between Lady Geste's eyes and Harry's, Winchester knew what was working in Carne's mind. The allusion was so casual that no one took any notice of it, and yet it spoke volumes to the worried Winchester.

Mrs. Anstruther's parties seldom varied as to their complement of guests. In this instance, however, Winchester had been substituted for Mr. Wills, greatly to that worthy's discomfiture, for he imagined that he had a prescriptive right to dine at Antholin when its owner was in residence. In this instance, however, the prescriptive right had been overridden, and Mr. Wills left out in the cold.

Filled with this sudden unreasoning dread of discovery, Winchester maneuvered to catch Lady

Geste alone. She, on the other hand, had arrived at that stage of life when digestion takes precedence of conscience, and, very wisely, declined to afford him the opportunity he sought. When, however, she had done ample justice to Mrs. Anstruther's hospitality, her mood became more lenient. Besides, she was not without curiosity as to Winchester's attitude. They had last parted with malicious satisfaction as far as she was concerned, with cold scorn on his—a scorn which also embraced biting contempt for her heartlessness. The man seemed to forget that if he had a right to transform himself into a cynical misanthrope, she also had a right to become a heartless woman of the world. She would give him the opportunity he sought, and end the matter once and for all. This recrudescence of past folly and wickedness must be met with drastic measures; if it were not, it might prove rather disconcerting.

The chance for which Winchester had been looking came after dinner. Mrs. Anstruther suggested that coffee should be taken under the willow in the Rose Garden; they would all look so much more imaginative by moonlight, and the perfume of the roses might perhaps serve as a provocative to sentiment. In her turn, Lady Geste hailed the suggestion as an inspiration of genius; she said she had never thought of it before, and, perhaps, it might help her to regard the wooing of Mr. Wills in a more favorable light. Hitherto she had seen only

its ludicrous side; now, perhaps, if she sat in the moonlight, she might be able to bring herself into a frame of mind necessary to imbue it with pathos. It would also renew Mr. Winchester's youth, she continued, and that, at least, would be a pronounced gain.

Winchester, quickly protesting that his worst enemy could not inflict a greater punishment on him than to renew his youth, offered Lady Geste his arm and led her towards the garden, the rest following at uncertain intervals. Something in the beauty of the night, and the beauty of the woman at his side, softened him a little towards her: besides, no matter what happened, he had a foreboding that she would make him look ridiculous; and he did not like being made to look ridiculous, least of all by Lady Geste. An attitude of sackcloth and ashes would be far more becoming than her eternal flippancy. She respected nothing, feared nothing, and was insatiably curious about everything which did not concern her.

"No, thanks; on consideration I don't think I'll take any coffee," she said to Winchester; "it's too stimulating, and I want to keep cool. You might make me say things I'd rather not, and then you would be angry when you found out that I did not mean them. Let us get further away from these people."

He followed her as she skirted the thicket at the bottom of the Rose Garden and halted beneath a

weeping willow, half of which grew in blackest shadow and the other half spread pendulous branches towards the light. She was so full of radiant life and health and strength that it was impossible to imagine her a woman with a past; all her instincts seemed to be leading her towards the future. The truth dawned upon him as he stood somewhat sourly regarding her—she was utterly irresponsible. To be angry with this woman, who had very little heart and no conscience, was like breaking a butterfly on a wheel.

"Now don't stand there glowering at me," she said mirthfully. "My dear, good man, one would imagine that you wanted to be tragic; and remember, tragedy is such bad form."

"It can't be worse than ours."

"'Ours!' Ah, now that is more hopeful; it shows that we have something in common. But we mustn't stay here long or people will begin to imagine things, and you know we cannot afford to have their imaginations exercised at our expense. That impertinent little Carne is always putting me leading questions about my early life, as if he wanted to find out something. Come, be reasonable. What are you going to do about Harry? I know why you sent him here, and I love him much more than I ever loved you or anyone else in the world. You can shame and worry and humiliate me if you like, but what are you going to do about him?"

"'After all, he is our son.'"

Winchester hesitated. "I don't know."

"After all, he is our son; and you can't make the boy uncomfortable for life because I am his mother. Hush-h! There's something in the bushes; I hope no one was listening." She came out into the moonlight. "It was great folly on your part to have brought him here. I suppose you wanted me to see him, get fond of him, and then you meant to take him away from me just as I took him away from you, and bring me to my knees. Was that what you meant to do?"

"I did—at first. I wanted to punish you. I told Mrs. Anstruther his mother was dead, and she promised to be a mother to him."

"For—for your sake?" scoffed Lady Geste.

"That hadn't occurred to me." A sudden light broke in on Winchester. "Before God, I never thought of that. There never was anything in it."

"No, but there might be. My dear unreasonable man, that was always your great fault—the things you never thought of. Why didn't you make me marry you in the beginning of things, and override my father's objections to men in the Guards? You are a man and I was only a weak woman."

"You wouldn't hear of it," said the dumfounded Winchester. "You said your father would rather see you dead than married to a man like me. You know you wouldn't hear of it."

"Well, why didn't you thrash me until I con-

sented?" laughed Lady Geste. "I should have respected you if you had. Looking back, you can see quite clearly that it was the proper thing for you to do. But, then, you were always the kind of man who would much rather do an improper thing at the wrong time than the proper thing at the right. Still, it is too late to remind you of it now. What are you going to do about Harry?"

"I don't know. I don't see why it should trouble you much after the way you have treated him."

"You ought either to have left him in the monastery (oh, yes, I am not so forgetful as you think; I had him traced there after he ran away from those wretched people) or, having brought him out of it, made up your mind what you were going to do with him. I'm fond of the boy, and I'm not going to see his future sacrificed to your gloomy ideas of revenge. After all, Winchester, gentlemen don't do these things. D'Artagnan would have been a gentleman but for one incident in his career."

He winced.

"Of course, the retort is obvious. Ladies don't do the things I have done, and they do the things I have left undone. But, oh, the monotony of that vicarage. Suet pudding on Wednesdays, sago on Saturdays, and two sermons—such sermons!—on Sundays. Mothers' meetings Tuesdays and Fridays, and helpful advice to the Sunday-school chil-

dren on Mondays and Thursdays. Then you came, and, in my inexperience, I preferred you to sago or suet. So rash, wasn't it? I suppose you did really suffer when you thought I no longer cared for you, and had come to my senses. Even now, if I go into a cottage and see a suet pudding it brings you back to me."

"There is no use in going over a stale story," said Winchester harshly.

"Oh, but there is, my dear man; you don't follow me." She lightly touched his arm with her fan to insure his attention. "Harry is in love with Betty, but he doesn't know it; Betty is in love with Harry, and probably does know it. But of course if he learns the truth about us, he will never speak to her, and they will both be profoundly unhappy. He will go back to Mahota, and she will wear the willow. I shouldn't like Betty to wear the willow. Oh, Winchester, we ought not to have followed those wandering fires. They will burn us up yet."

"Why should Harry learn the truth about you? The secret has been faithfully kept all these years."

"Oh, man, man!" Her eyes were still laughing, but there was a lurking gravity in their lucent depths which belied the laughter. "Such things are like murder—they will out. Our secret hasn't been discovered before, because no one was particularly interested in discovering it. And now there is someone who is particularly interested in dis-

covering it. You heard what he said at dinner about the resemblance between Harry and myself."

"You mean Carne?"

"I mean Carne, vindictive little wretch that he is. And to think that I rather liked him once! I know he admires me. Winchester, why do men admire me?"

"I don't know. I am sick of the whole wretched business!"

"So am I. And Carne isn't a fool. He promises, if looks go for anything, to make it interesting for both of us."

"The only way out of it is for us to marry. Then the secret will be safe."

"Marry!" She made a wry face in the moonlight. "Marry you! My dear man, I couldn't think of it, I positively couldn't. I'm fond of Harry, but not fond enough of him to make such a sacrifice as that. I'd rather go into a nunnery. 'Walk the dim cloister and distribute dole,' and all that sort of thing. But marry you!—no!"

"Why should it be such a sacrifice?"

"Why? Why?" She began to laugh. "Oh, look in your glass, Winchester. Look in your glass. I am fond of gayety, mirth—you are as sour as a crab; I like the good things of life—you don't; I love crowds—you are enamored of solitude; I am brisk, energetic, flighty if you will—you are dull, lethargic, apathetic, positively yellow with melancholy. Oh, no, it couldn't be, it couldn't be.

I should die of you in a month, and you'd die of me; and then the poor boy would be an orphan without anyone to fight his battles for him. Besides, I know very well you'd much rather marry Mary Anstruther and settle down, whereas I haven't the slightest intention of settling down. No, Winchester, such a desperate remedy as that is worse than the disease. It won't do. You must think of something less fatal to us both."

"Can't I suggest something?" drawled Carne, sauntering out of the thicket, coffee-cup in hand. "I brought you your coffee, but your conversation was so interesting I'm rather afraid I've let it get cold. You've been talking about me pretty freely; better take me into your councils."

Winchester's first impulse was to spring at him.

"Don't do that, you'll upset the coffee," grinned Carne.

Lady Geste, who had not lost her self-possession, laid a restraining hand on Winchester's arm. "Don't be so melodramatic, Winchester. It is just what I expected. I always knew he would be a bold, bad baronet of Adelphi extraction. These successors to a title earned by a father's merit generally have a bad streak in them; and Sir Eustace is all streaks. Now, Sir Eustace, don't stand there, looking foolish. I knew you were there all the time, but thought it better to bring things to a climax, so invented all this rubbish. What do you think you are going to do?"

She blazed with anger in the moonlight. Sir Eustace looked at her with smoldering eyes, and thought that she lied well. "'Pon my word, I don't know, if you don't," he said curtly, and, turning on his heel, moved slowly towards the house.

Lady Geste looked after him with sudden enlightenment. "If he can't get Betty, he'll make love to me some day," she declared, with conviction; "and I did so want to marry poor old Wills. He—he's so restful. As for Carne, I'd rather wed an earthworm or any other kind of worm. Give me your arm, and we'll go back to the others. Well, you've got us all into this difficulty, and now you'll have to get us out of it. Poor Harry! Why didn't we leave him vegetating in the monastery! I think I'll have some coffee, after all. Carne was right; this is very cold, and you—" she glanced with amused contempt at Winchester's grim face—"are not very stimulating. Now, Mary, you mustn't be shocked, but Mr. Winchester and myself have been talking over old times, with Sir Eustace behind a tree to play propriety, and he wasn't a success. He didn't know that we were enacting a little comedy for his benefit, and he's thinking it over. Two lumps of sugar, please, dear Sir Eustace. Why didn't you join us before? It would have been so much more amusing. You look as if you'd had earwigs crawling all over you."

Sir Eustace handed her the sugar. "She's

magnificent!" he said to himself, as she raised her cup with a steady hand. "Pity she isn't twenty years younger. Now I'll think over how I'm to settle that sniveling monk. It's very certain that he's done for as regards Betty. It was a devilish good idea of mine to follow Lady Geste when I saw them sneak off like that. They only wanted the shaveling savage to make up their family party. Betty's mine now. How well she'll look at Carne!"

Lady Geste, calmly sipping her coffee, followed his train of thought as if he had spoken aloud. "Don't be too sure, my young friend," she mused. "Don't be too sure. A battle is never lost until it is over. You've Betty to deal with, and from what I know of her she possesses a good deal of latent obstinacy, sweet though she is."

An owl began to hoot in the ivy. "I've had enough of the moonlight," Lady Geste declared. "Sir Eustace, fetch me a shawl and we'll go in. You're not half so attentive as Mr. Wills."

"She means to show fight," said Sir Eustace; but he brought the shawl.

"Thank you," said Lady Geste sweetly. "Men generally do as I tell them."

"Some of them," said Sir Eustace, shutting his teeth together with a snap.

"Ah, well, then you are one of the 'some'. Aren't you?"

"We shall see," said Sir Eustace.

"Of course we shall. Come along, Mary. Mr. Winchester, if you are not tired listening to that owl, come and listen to me. I'll promise not to hoot at you." She drew them all after her up to the house. On the threshold, with a humorous sense of the fitness of things, she paused a moment. "You go first, Mary," she said to Mrs. Anstruther. "You go first, and Mr. Winchester will follow. He generally follows your lead;" and she glanced round at the others as if to impress on them the discovery which she had just made.

"Devilish clever!" said Sir Eustace, rubbing his painted eye as he brought up the rear. "Devilish clever! Couldn't have carried it off better myself. Dev-il-ish clev-er! But I see through her for all that, and she knows it."

CHAPTER XIV

REVELATIONS

LADY GESTE was not left very long in doubt as to Carne's intentions. He had not had such a stroke of luck for a long time, and fully intended to make the most of it. And, although he did not mean to compromise Lady Geste unless she stood in his way, if she could not be made to understand that he meant to marry Betty he would show her no mercy. It was true that he had nothing definite to go upon except the clandestine overhearing of a private conversation; but that conversation had been so retrospective and comprehensive that he believed himself able to find out all he wanted to know without the slightest difficulty. At any rate, he would make Lady Geste believe so. Of course she would fight him. Still, he did not believe that she would be a very formidable antagonist.

"I thought you'd see me," he said, entering her drawing-room the next afternoon. "That's why I didn't write to say I was coming. I knew you'd expect me." He tried to speak in matter-of-fact tones, although it was evident that he was nervous and ill at ease. Lady Geste at close quarters was

much more dangerous than he had imagined, and she did not appear to be at all nervous. On the contrary, she looked more self-possessed and beautiful than ever. The situation was unique, and she was doing her best in the way of millinery to live up to it. Even Carne, nervously preoccupied as he was, relaxed at the sight of her radiant face. It was alive with good humor and the pleasant anticipation of battle. That she meant to stick to her guns was evident from the self-possession with which she greeted him. For the moment Carne felt himself routed before the battle had begun. The knowledge made him swagger and forget his customary self-possession.

They shook hands after the manner of gladiators, and she at once carried the conflict into the enemy's quarters: "Sit down, my dear bold, bad baronet; but do, for a moment, please, forget your stage manners—or rather the lack of them—and become an English gentleman. It is so much pleasanter. Besides, these airs and graces must be rather trying to live up to, especially when you know all the time that you are rather ashamed of yourself. Now, that's right. Draw your chair up here and let me give you some tea. It is so much pleasanter in this little drawing-room that I told Wilkins to show you in here."

"I am to be envied," said Carne, sitting down with a sneer which implied that he did not mean what he said. He had come to dictate terms, not

to be told about such superfluous things as manners. It was mean of his hostess to go off on such a side issue. When a man has money, his manners are his own property, and he meant to make Lady Geste acknowledge the fact before the interview terminated. He also intended to make her acknowledge a good many other things.

"Of course you are to be envied. You are too young to realize it now, but you will some day; and then," she said, with a merry laugh, "you will be sorry you did not make a better use of your opportunities. It is not often you get such a chance, and yet you have done nothing but look unpleasant ever since you entered the room. Ah, now, if you were only Mr. Wills! But, then, he always proposes to me, and you never do."

Carne had looked for tragedy, entreaties, tears, supplications for mercy, and the woman was, vulgarly speaking, chaffing him. He did not know what to make of it, but sat looking at her as she poured out his tea, and admired the supple curve of her beautiful wrist. It was a strong hand, too—the hand of a woman who could hold her own, and meant to do it, even if she had to strike hard.

"You take sugar?" She looked at him inquiringly as if so important a matter demanded serious consideration. "Pardon my suggesting it, but you do require a little sweetening, you know. You must run the risk of its making you fat."

Carne sulkily grunted that he took sugar and that nothing could ever make him fat. As a matter of fact, he did not take sugar, but she bewildered him.

"So good of you. And milk? Of course. A little of the milk of human kindness won't be out of place, either. Are you going to be kind to me?"

She handed him his tea, and held him with her laughing eyes—eyes which were as clear and limpid as a child's. "I know what you're thinking about. Yes, it is a pity I am old enough to be your mother; but, then, think what a privilege to be the mother of so great a son."

"I don't see what there is to laugh at," he said, swallowing his tea all at once. "It's no laughing matter. And I didn't come here to discuss your age."

She made a wry face. "Oh, please don't gulp down your tea like that. One would think that you remembered the way your father—report says that he began life as a navvy on the Great Western; I'm sure I should have loved his frank, free ways—drank out of a tin bottle at his dinner hour; only, I believe, as a rule, he did not drink tea. Perhaps you may remember? It wasn't always tea, was it—not if reports are to be credited?"

"I didn't come here to talk about my father," he said sulkily. "All the world knows what he was, and how he made his money. He's gone now,

and I have the money. All the world knows that too."

"Ah, yes, money is so convenient, isn't it? Do let me give you another cup? No? You see, the world has labeled your father and knows how to place him, but there are one or two little things the world does not know about you, and it is not quite sure about your proper—or improper—label. Oh, yes, certain things have reached me in whispers—those whispers which are so much more penetrating than shouts."

"They aren't true, not a word of them. I am surprised you should listen to such idle rumors."

"There, there! How do you know they are favorable or the reverse! My dear Sir Eustace, you are so impetuous, I can't think what has come over you. At one time you affected the impassive deliberation dear to the British youth; now you are as impulsive as I used to be. What is the matter with you? Is it because I talked of your father and his frank, free, unfettered ways? Now that I have made you comfortable (you are sure that I have made you comfortable?), why do you want to see me? You're surely not going to worry me about what you overheard, or fancied you overheard, last night? I then attributed your behavior to the influence of Mrs. Anstruther's champagne. Surely you have not come here to-day to tell me that it was premeditated?"

She put down her teacup, and leaned against the

back of an armchair in an attitude which did full justice to her perfect figure. "Oh, no, I'm not trying to melt you," she said, noticing his reluctant glance of admiration. "You are so amusing to-day in a bourgeois sort of way that I really cannot help asking (you'll pardon my curiosity, won't you?) what you have come here about. You seemed to think that you made a discovery last night; and your discovery," she spoke almost sharply, "has not improved your manners. As I said just now, you have yet to learn how to enter a drawing-room. I was within an ace of having you shown out again! You conveyed the impression that heredity was too much for you, and that you were wheeling a barrow. Fortunately, I remembered you were only the second generation, and took pity on you."

She had meant to rouse him, and this time she succeeded. "I can see your little game," he said sulkily. "You want to know how much I know, and get me to blurt it all out. You don't know how much I overheard last night."

"No, I don't, and it does not interest me in the least." She recovered her good temper at once. "I know perfectly well what you think you know; but I do want you to disabuse your mind of all this nonsense. If I cannot succeed in doing so (you are not very open to conviction, you know), it will be so very unpleasant for you."

"I don't see where the unpleasantness comes in —for me."

"No, but you will—later. You don't play the game fairly. You begin by eavesdropping—a device as old as the hills, but not in general vogue among honorable people. It isn't really, you know—although you pretend that the end justifies the means."

He sneered.

"Yes, perhaps it is wrong of me not to remember that all these things must necessarily be so new to you," she said, with smiling good humor. "At least, you were among honorable people last night, and you took an ungentlemanly advantage of the fact. It is only on the stage that people take to eavesdropping as part of the game. Of course you cannot use the information you fancied you acquired last night."

"But I can and will."

"Oh, no, you cannot—and will not. If I mistake not, you have one black eye already, although it is so artistically disguised. Surely you don't want to run the risk of another!"

"Oh, if you are going to threaten me with personal violence from that precious son of yours, I——"

"Stop!" She put her hands to her ears. "Oh, Sir Eustace, Sir Eustace, when will you learn to discuss a little matter like this with an outward show of decorum. Remember the conventionalities. Whatever we may do, or whatever we may say, let us remember the conventionalities."

"Have you always considered it strictly necessary? I didn't know you were so punctilious."

"Oh, but I have to be. Remember my position. I really cannot allow you to make such an ungentlemanly statement in so bearish a way. Now, out with it. What is it you think you know? And what use do you propose to make of your knowledge? If you think that you are going to frighten me, dismiss that thought from your mind, for I am not to be intimidated. I never was afraid of anyone but my father in my life, and I was only afraid of him because, when we differed, he always appealed to theology. You cannot argue with a man when he invokes the aid of the unknown; he shifts his ground so easily that it is impossible to corner him. Besides, you don't for an instant suppose that I have successfully fought the battle of life all these years to be afraid of a stripling like you, even though you do strike below the belt."

"I like you better when you are angry. Then, you forget to play a part. Since you must know it, I heard all that you said to Winchester last night."

"Are you quite sure? And may I ask what roused your—curiosity?"

"The obvious likeness between you and this precious monk. I've noticed it for some days past. When Winchester came near him, he had one or two tricks of manner which settled the fact that Winchester is his father. When you came near him, there was no doubt that you are his

mother. He has your eyes, chin, nose. Now, I have been putting two and two together. Either you and Winchester were married before you became Geste's wife, or you were not married to Winchester."

"What then?"

"If you married Winchester first, and then married Geste while Winchester still lives, the law of bigamy is a very awkward thing; if you did not marry Winchester, the other fact is equally awkward."

"You mean Harry Winchester?"

"I mean Harry Winchester, as you call him."

"Yes, he is an awkward fact—for you. Now let me see." She began to walk up and down the room. "I presume you owe me no ill-will?"

"Oh, certainly not. I even admire you."

"That is more insulting than your dislike. I do not think that the admiration of a man like you is necessary to my well-being." But she smiled. "Of course I do not admit anything. You cannot prove anything; and if you say anything without proof, you will find the situation rather unpleasant for yourself. I think I could brazen it out, even if your suspicions were correct—which of course I deny. Then, let me see. Your object? You want to marry Betty, and you are jealous of the young gentleman who gave you a black eye. Oh, you need not deny it; I know all about it."

"Well, what if I am?"

"I don't see how it helps you to get young Mr. Winchester out of the way."

"It is everything. I was making all the running before he came. Now she sends back my orchids, won't ride with me, nor look at me if she can help it. If it were not for Winchester, I could marry Betty in a month."

"Oh, you think so! Now, look me in the face and believe me when I tell you that you have as much chance of marrying Betty Anstruther as you have of marrying me."

"I have made up my mind to marry her, and I am going to do it," he said doggedly.

"If I were you I would unmake it again. That way misfortunes lies—for you."

"I am going to do it, I tell you. I generally get what I want."

"Don't say I haven't tried to prevent your rushing on misfortune. Betty would not marry you if you were the last man in the world. I know that for an absolute fact."

"She shall marry me."

"We shall see. Now, with regard to myself. You have no proofs. Don't you think that you had better hold your tongue? There is nothing to be gained by telling such an absurd story."

He smiled triumphantly. "I thought you'd change your tone, and that we should get to something presently."

"Well, we have got to something. It is very

simple. For your own sake, and everyone else's, you had better hold your tongue."

"Why? It seems to me that the best thing I can do is to speak out at once."

"If you do, you will not get Betty. She would loathe you."

"But think of the pleasure I should have in narrating the facts!"

"Oh, I have no doubt you would take pleasure in narrating the facts; but think of the pleasure certain people will have in thrashing you if you do narrate the—facts! Why, even Mr. Wills would challenge you; and, as you know, the Winchesters are both muscular men."

"I'm not afraid of either of them. And if once a whisper got about!"

"Oh, yes, but my dear, good man, it will not get about. We live so rapidly nowadays that no one cares what may have happened twenty years ago. For our own sakes, both Winchester and myself would deny it; and I defy you, or anyone else, to prove it. People don't do such things nowadays."

"I've found out that you were married to Geste in your maiden name," he said significantly, "and, then, this sudden springing of a son upon people by Winchester with no previous introduction of the lady, is rather thin. If his wife died, where did she die? And when? Who was she? Why was the marriage concealed? Where is the certificate

of his son's birth? Was he born in Canada or England? You see, it is easy to find out."

"Very well. Find out. If the matter is so easy, it is scarcely worth your while coming here for me to help you. I admit nothing, I deny nothing. I have met you on terms of social intimacy at Mrs. Anstruther's, and I should be sorry to cause anything unpleasant to happen to a friend of hers. But, of course, if by any chance this story should leak out, you will not be a friend of hers any longer. Mary Anstruther would not tolerate eavesdroppers."

"Oh, I think differently. Still, there is nothing to be gained by our quarreling. I want to make terms with you."

"You do? With me! You amaze me! What about? Why don't you go to Mr. Winchester? Is it because I am only a poor, weak woman that you come to me? He is not more easily frightened than I am."

"Oh, his turn will come later. I shall have something to say to him by and by. Look here, Lady Geste, I don't want to be hard on you. You're a fine woman, and you've been devilish kind to me in taking me up, and all that sort of thing, don't you know."

"And so, in return for my kindness, my 'devilish' kindness, you want to take me down? I don't see the force of your logic."

"Of course it's easy to chaff a fellow off his

legs," he said desperately. "What I want you to do is to send this fellow away to his monkery, and leave me a fair field with Betty. If you don't, I go straight to him and tell this young Winchester——"

"Mr. Winchester," said Wilkins, announcing Harry.

Carne smothered an exclamation as Harry came in somewhat dubiously. "I beg your pardon; they didn't tell me you were engaged. I thought I heard someone mention my name. Shall I go away again?"

Lady Geste enjoyed Carne's discomfiture. "No; don't go," she said, carried away by the impulse of the moment, and quite forgetting what the truth must necessarily mean to Harry. "Sir Eustace has just been threatening to tell you something about me."

Carne turned green.

"Threatening!—you!" Harry came to her side. Then he turned towards Carne. "Perhaps you will have the goodness to repeat your threats!"

"Carne hesitated; but, to do him justice, he was no coward. "You've turned up just in time to give me the pleasure of introducing you to your—mother!"

"What!" Harry made a step forward. Carne hastily drew back.

"Your own mother."

A great light came into Harry's face. He held

out his hand cordially to Carne, who retreated still further. Then he turned to Lady Geste. "Is it true? Are you—my mother? You? I thought my mother was dead. Is it a trick?"

"No, Harry." There was an exultant ring in her voice which Carne had never heard before. "He speaks the truth."

His arms were round her in a second, his kisses raining down upon her face. "You—my mother! It is wonderful!"

She disengaged herself from his embrace, and her heart died within her at the thought of the revelation which her own imprudence had caused her to make. She could not lie to him even to save him. "Yes, Harry, I am your mother, and I love you. That is why I have scarcely let you out of my sight since you came here; that is why I am being threatened by this cur. It is quite true, and I am proud of it."

"True! It must be true." He gazed at her with delighted eyes. "It must be true. And such a mother! It was worth coming into the world to meet her. Now I know how I dreamed of the Madonna. Now I know why your face seemed familiar to me. Mother! Mother!" His arms were round her again. All the starved heart of the monk was in them as he pressed her to him. "And my father, does he know of this?"

"Yes, he knows."

"He never told me. He said my mother was

dead. Why did he say you were dead?" He stayed Carne as the latter was about to sneak away. "Why are you going? I haven't thanked you for telling me this. Won't you forgive me for my unmannerly violence? Won't you let me thank you for your good news?"

Carne hardened his heart, and brushed aside Harry's outstretched hand—the hand which came between him and Betty. "You don't expect me to shake hands with a bastard!" he said roughly; and went out.

"Bas——!" The word died away upon Harry's lips. "Mother—what does he mean? Shall I go after him? Shall I? Speak, mother, speak. I'll choke the lie in his throat! Why, mother, you—you're silent. I'll fetch him back!"

She put a detaining hand upon his sleeve. "Harry, you must have known it sooner or later. I am a wicked woman; that man speaks the truth." She sank at his feet.

He lifted her up. "You are my mother."

"I have spoiled your life."

"You are my mother."

"I have brought shame and disgrace upon you."

"You are my mother."

"I have ruined your dearest hopes—branded you with shame—broken your heart—robbed you of the girl who loves you!"

"Mother!"

"I am a wicked woman. I didn't realize what I was doing, Harry. I didn't think."

"And my—father?"

"He was not to blame. He wanted to marry me; I wouldn't bind myself. We were both poor, I was ambitious. Ever since I have seen you, Harry, my heart has gone out to you. I tried not to do so, but I loved you! I loved you! And I knew that the evil must come upon us, that I could not stave it off. You could never have married Betty without her knowing. It is better that you should know at once."

"Then she doesn't know, mother?"

"No, Harry, no."

"And you forgive me for having brought this woe upon you? If I had never come here, this would not have happened."

"I forgive! I!" She choked, and fell on her knees, but he raised and held her to his heart.

"You—mother! It is wonderful—wonderful! That is why I loved you when we first met."

"Yes, I am your mother, Harry. Forgive me. Forgive me! Indeed, I love you. Forgive me!"

He kissed her tenderly, but his face was very white and sad. "I came into the world, and God gave me a father to love—a father who loves me. Now I know why he has sorrowed over me, has guarded me with such anxious care. God gave me Betty and—you. And, after having taught me the sweetness of human love, God calls me back

to the silence of Mahota. The shutters of silence will close down upon me, and close me out from all that I have periled my soul to love. You have all been very good to me; have made me very human; have shown me that my boyish hands knew not what they were doing when they drew down those shutters between me and the world. Once only have they been lifted. Now, they shut me out again from you, and Betty, and—and from him!"

"And you don't reproach us, Harry?"

"Reproach! Ah, no! But I must go—back to Mahota."

"Give up the world! Give us up! Give up—love?"

"I was never of the world, mother. You have all given me your love; I do not give you up. I go to pray for you, to intercede with God, to wean you from the world, to pray for myself that I may learn to do what is required of me before it becomes impossible."

"But no, Harry. You shall not go! You shall not go! I will declare everything, become an outcast, rather than let you bear the burden of my wrongdoing. You shall not crucify yourself for—me!"

"Mother, there is—Betty!" His voice softened into exquisite tenderness. "Lately I had begun to dream dreams, to think—to think. Ah, well, we will not talk about that. Her young life must not be pained. She must never know. My

father will defend you from the world. He has the right. For your sake and for Betty's the cloister must swallow me up, I must disappear as if I had never been. I had grown arrogant, proud, puffed up; meek Brother Colombe was dead. Now he is alive again, yet dead; but he dies for the women who love him, the women he loves. If you now give me sorrow, have you not also given me joy? Pray for me as I pray for you. Pray for me as one dead, who died—for you!"

She cast herself in utter abasement at his feet, realizing in this dread moment for the first time all that her sin must mean to him; all that, in the future, it must mean to her. She felt once more his lips upon her brow, heard his anguished cry of "Mother!" When she looked up, dreading to meet the mute sorrow in the eyes so like her own, he was gone.

The next morning Winchester came to her. "Where is my son? What have you done with him? He has gone. Here's a letter from him. Just 'Good-by'. That's all."

She laid her hand upon his arm, and gazed at him with tearless eyes. "We have no son—now. He has gone back to Mahota."

"To Mahota!" Winchester staggered against the wall. The west wind blew softly outside; but above the whispering of the wind he heard the solemn organ peal, saw the long procession of white-robed monks moving with downcast eyes and

folded hands towards their stalls. Behind them came the lay Brothers garbed in brown, and last of all—Brother Colombe. The chapel clock tolled the hour of two, and still the procession filed past with noiseless tread. A sound recalled him to life. Lady Geste had fallen almost fainting in his arms. "It is too horrible!—too horrible! How are we to tell Betty? It will break her heart. I'll go over at once, and try to see her before Carne gets there."

CHAPTER XV

"TO-MORROW!"

AFTER Harry had left his mother he wandered into the woods which surrounded Geste, and flung himself under the spreading boughs of an oak. From the branches above an exquisitive starling looked down upon him with surprise. This mortal was so strangely quiet he might have been carved out of stone. Once, the starling remembered, it had seen a man come under this very same tree, throw himself on the grass, and make curious noises in his throat before pressing a little shining thing to his forehead. The shining thing made so much noise that, when the smoke cleared, the starling which, unlike most of its race, loved solitude, had flown away in affright. When it came back the next day the man was still there, but he made no sound; and there were curious marks on the grass, which smelt of blood. This man did not make any of those choking noises in his throat; he sat there, staring straight down the green vista as if he failed to see anything. His eyes were wet and shining—very like a young fawn's when it first wakes and looks upon life. Presently the man knelt on the grass, his hands upturned, asking for something. His lips moved,

yet he made no sound. The starling did not fear this man. Something in the expression of his violet eyes gave confidence to the bird; it flew down a little lower and peered inquisitively at the intruder, who, looking up, saw it for the first time. Then it flew lower still, and chirped cheerily to the strange being below.

The man smiled back as if the starling had brought him a message, and, his hands folded in front of him, walked away, with downcast head. The starling wanted to fly after him and perch upon his shoulder; but the man slowly turned a corner and disappeared. Then the starling forgot all about him, and went off to a flight of its fellows, fussing in the wake of the Antholin rooks.

Had the bird followed the quiet man, it would have seen him cross the park to Antholin, enter the open door without noticing the peafowl, walk slowly up to his room, and open a box wherein lay a curiously heavy, shabby, brown robe. It would have seen the quiet man again kneel, and lift his hands as if it (the starling) were still there, bringing the message for which he had asked. Then another man knocked at the door, and the first man hastily shut the box, put on funereal black clothes, and joined people who came out of different rooms in answer to the ringing of a bell.

For the rest of the evening the man who had learned that he was without a name, sat in a dream wherein he saw many things—things which wrung

his very soul. When its long torture was over he collected his thoughts with an effort, and said "good-night" to Betty and her mother. Here it was that his customary self-restraint stood him in good stead. Betty, indeed, at times throughout the evening had an uneasy consciousness that all was not well with him, but did not show it; she also was learning habits of self-restraint. When a maid is conscious in her own heart that there is but one man in the world, her sole object is to prevent him from making the same discovery. Betty knew well enough, and was perfectly frank with herself on the subject, that she loved Harry; she was equally aware that he did not yet know that he loved her. Neither did he know that it was she who had taught him everything he had learned at Antholin, until no one could have thought that he had always been a recluse ignorant of the very elements of social life. His long-dormant brain responded alertly to her every suggestion. She knew that no one else could influence him to such an extent, and rejoiced greatly that it should be so. Of a verity, monasteries have much to answer for when they dull the primal instincts so completely that a man has to be taught afresh when he enters the world.

On this particular night, however, primal instincts seemed to be coming rapidly to the front, for Betty caught Harry looking at her once or twice as if snatching a fugitive and fearful joy. She told herself that he was slowly awakening to

the truth, that this awakening frightened him, it so clearly shattered forever the monastic ideal and proved that he was but human. Most people, Betty thought, would have hailed the knowledge with rapturous delight. Not so this young anchorite, for he sighed as if conscious that he must descend from the cold heights of self-abnegation to the warm valleys of human love and affection. All his short life he had been trained to shun women; hence the more timid the joy he now experienced in discovering that they were essential to his happiness—that a good woman makes a man's heaven, a bad one, his hell. Had Betty known the truth, had she realized the struggle that was going on in his heart, she would not have given him her hand so tranquilly at parting. She was even conscious of an amused astonishment at the way he held it for a moment, then let it go so unexpectedly that it did not seem to be a part of her as it dropped limply by her side.

Betty went up to her room with a slight feeling of disappointment. Some shadow of restraint had crept between them, had marred the sweetness of loving. On the morrow she would ask him about this covert misunderstanding, brush it away, be to him as though it had never troubled her. Finding it useless to attempt to sleep with this burden on her young soul, she dismissed her maid, threw a wrapper over her shoulders, opened the leaded casement, and gave herself up to a delicious reverie—a

reverie full of castles in the air, of sweet maiden fancies, of dreamy delights, of plans for the future wherein her path was to be strewn with roses which should never fade. As she looked out of the ivy-covered casement she could see the Rose Garden below, the red roses scarcely showing, the white sweetly virginal in the moonlight. Some day she would tell Harry, when they were walking there, how shy and blind she had thought him; some day she—hist! What was that? Surely not the creaking of a door! Everyone had gone to bed long ago.

She drew back a little from the casement, and watched. It seemed so absurd to fancy that burglars were trying to gain an entrance to Antholin. The place was far too well guarded for any attempt of that kind. But it was annoying that so prosaic a being as a burglar should come between her and her new-born heaven, and dissipate her dainty delights. Then her feeling of annoyance quickly changed to one of alarm, for the creaking noise came from within and was caused by someone opening the door of the long corridor which led towards the Rose Garden.

She came to the casement, and waited until a slow step sounded on the gravel path. Of course she knew that slow, deliberate step. The person who had left the house must enter the moonlight directly. When he did so she almost shrieked, for Antholin had never witnessed so strange a sight

since medieval times. A youthful lay Brother of La Trappe, clad in the brown robe of the order, and carrying a knotted scourge in his hand, walked slowly towards the little willow arbor, entered it, and disappeared. She could see the pale face of the monk, doubly pale in the moonlight. What did it all mean? His eyes were cast on the ground, his features contracted with pain.

Carried away by the impulse of the moment, Betty hastily dressed, opened her door, and stole noiselessly downstairs. Yes, the corridor door was open. The night air blew freshly on her face; heaven's own peace brooded over the garden; not a leaf stirred.

She stole noiselessly across the dewy grass towards the weeping willow, and peered within the shelter of its drooping branches. When her eyes became accustomed to the dim light, she detected a brown mass prone on the ground, and wondered all the more. She did not know that it is a custom of offending Trappists to accuse themselves, and one another, as they lay prone on the ground, of the sins they have committed or have seen one another commit. Ordinarily, the Abbot occupies a dais at one end of the room, with a cross over his head, and the monks sit upon forms ranged on each side. When they have confessed, their penances are appointed by the Abbot and unquestioningly performed. In this instance Harry thought himself alone, and was confessing to God.

Betty drew back. What right had she to intrude on such a scene! Deep groans burst from his heaving chest as he poured out a torrent of words, owning all that he had done amiss and pleading that the grief which beset him might pass away. Then she caught her own name, and hastily withdrew. It was not meet that she should hear. Sorrow had given him winged words with which to plead to God.

For more than an hour she remained waiting until Harry's paroxysm of grief should exhaust itself. The night began to grow chilly, a wavering bat brushed against her cheek, the stars shone down with mild radiance. Strange cries came from the thicket. The rustling movements of small animals in the undergrowth filled her with terror. She drew her cloak more closely around her, and started to find it wet with the fast-falling dew. Antholin reared its grim front to the skies, a thin vapor played over the shallow surface of the moat. The mist came up to the lower walls and raised a barrier between her and them. But at last, when her heart began to grow faint within her, and the voices of the night whispered hopeless sorrow and grief, she heard a slow, dull, lagging step upon the gravel path, and Harry came towards the house.

There was the same set, tense look about his lips. The sadness of his eyes filled her with pity —and dread. What had happened to change him

thus? Looking forward in one brief second, she pictured him an old man, bent, broken, bowed with the weight of his solitary life. And, mindful of the beautiful youth who had come to Antholin, she vowed that this thing should not be. She would save him from it, save him from himself.

He passed so closely that his brown robe brushed her dress. She put forth a hand to catch it, and as he turned to disentangle it their eyes met. The next moment she threw herself sobbing on his breast, and he, submerged in a sad underworld of grief, knew that God had vouchsafed him one moment of happiness before his feet were set in the thorny paths of renunciation and pain.

Timidly his arms stole round her. "Harry! Harry! What is it?" she sobbed. "I heard you—I followed—waited here all this time in the sad, lonely night. What is it? What troubles you? Why didn't you tell me? I would have helped you to bear your pain. Tell me about it that I may help you still."

He looked down at her with quivering lips. He was so very young, had lived so lonely a life of silence all his days. Since he had come into the world, the world had given him fresh instincts, new desires, had taught him the joy of what he had never known, of what he must never know. The love of "maiden for maiden" was his, and he must give it up, although she was in his arms, although the tears of the woman he loved were on his cheeks.

He must leave her—leave her for all the lonely days and years to come!

Very gently he disengaged her arms, and looked at her with such yearning grief and sorrow that her questions died away. She read parting in his eyes; that he must go back to his monastery as suddenly as he had emerged from it. Go away—from her!

She put her hands on his shoulders. Her eyes gazed into his with such courage, hope, and trust, that his lips trembled again. "Now, Harry, what is it? No one else can be to you what I am, no one else can be to me what you are. Tell me."

His eyes told her all. He loved her. She drank in the penetrating sweetness of their gaze; it filled her, thrilled her, with delight. In the face of it, nothing else mattered: they were the only man and maid in God's world. The golden gates of heaven were open to them, the great secret had come to them both. He loved her; she loved him. they stood together in God's world, their world, to walk the paths of life, to make the joy of living even sweeter still, to brush away this nameless sorrow which possessed him, to render other lives better and purer by the very force and example of their love. They would be together always. Custom would but heighten their happiness, bring them nearer, broaden all their aims and views in the one great good of loving and of being loved. He was not as other men; he never had been as other men, for he came to her unsullied by contact with the

world. He was her own, her very own, to love, cherish, and worship, until, after a life of happiness and good deeds to lighten the cares of those unhappy ones who knew not love, they were called hence to the God who had given them each other. She forgot the chilly gloom, the ghostly forms of phantom trees, the eerie voices of the night. His eyes held her spellbound; hers held him. What need was there for speech! But even as she gazed the rapt joy died down from his face, the shutters of silence spread blankness over it, replaced it with a dull, strange apathy which chilled her very soul. "Harry, what is it?" she whispered. Her voice frightened her; it vibrated so clearly through the night air. "Tell me! What is it? Tell me your grief. Let me share it with you."

What could he say to Betty? What could he do? His one object in life was to guard her from the knowledge of this shameful secret which forever tore them asunder. Her pure feet must not be set in the mire. She must learn to forget him. For the moment he had forgotten, but he must never again forget. All these people had been so good to him. Whatever faults and sins and follies they had committed, they had sought to atone to him for them all, had lavished affection and kindness on him, had heaped gifts on him, seeking for nothing in return. Did he not owe them some duty, some kindness, some sacrifice? He was not fit for the world, had never been fit for it. It was

better that he should go out of it, make them forget him, spare the father whom he loved the pain of an interview which could lead to nothing.

As he reeled beneath this stunning blow, he was conscious of a profound grief at again losing his father—this father who, bad as he had been in the world's estimation, had shown nothing but love and kindness to himself. It was this tenderness, this affection, which made it so hard for him to leave Winchester. How could he return to a realm of silence when human voices would forever speak to him, forever call him back? He could hear them even now, wrestling with him, tempting him to forsake God and follow a will-o'-the-wisp light which led but to destruction.

He was young as time goes—not yet twenty. Trappists lived to be old—very old; some of the Brothers were eighty—just four times his age. Four times! Sixty years more of vigils and supplications and fasts, immured within the monastery precincts, whilst the world went on its way, children being born into it, men and women living, loving, and dying in it, whilst he——! Yes, he would have no part in it. All that remained for him was to leave Betty before Carne revealed the truth. If Carne were gross enough to come into her presence with such a story, he would stick at nothing. Betty must not know. She must never know. It was for her happiness he was doing this; and he must not mar his act of renunciation by foolish

weakness, by any hint or sign of the real reason. He intended to slip away in the early dawn, catch the Liverpool steamer, and start for Montreal on the morrow. Betty would grieve over him, sorrow for him, at first, then understand that he could not help himself, that sometimes life deals with us as it pleases and not as we ourselves please, in spite of our frantic pleadings and prayers. After the first shock of it all she would readjust her life to its altered conditions and—forget him! Yes; he must bear even that—to be forgotten by her—the hardest task of all. It was part of the same sad story of life which has been since the world began —the renunciation of earthly happiness at the call of duty, for the sake of that heavenly bliss which sometimes seems so far—so very far—away.

Betty spoke. Bathed in the glory of the knowledge which had come to her, she did not realize that his silence meant farewell. He did not speak, because speech was unnecessary. Sweet as it would be to hear him say that he loved her, she was reluctant to have it put into words. Words could not strengthen the knowledge. Speech was common to all; his eyes were hers, and spoke to her alone. She knew now that

> "The law of laws is love,
> That needs two worlds to perfect man and woman,
> And an eternity to teach God's ways."

Hers was a happy, joyous faith. She did not believe that God would bestow on her this great

gift of love only to take it away again. She looked into Harry's very soul, and put her fresh young lips to his—their first sacramental kiss. "Courage, dear heart," she whispered. "Courage, and all will yet be well. To-morrow—in the sunlight—to the music of running waters, the singing of birds—we will speak of this; but not now, dear heart, not now. The night grows wan, the starlight fades, the chilly dawn comes on apace; but our hearts will never grow cold, our faith never falter. To-morrow, sweetheart, to-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow! Oh, God," she put up her palms to heaven, "bring us to-morrow soon!"

He fell on his knees and raised the hem of her garment to his lips, kneeling there with bowed head until she should pass out of his life into that to-morrow which would never dawn upon their love.

At the door she turned, framed in a mantle of mist, her sweet eyes shining. "To-morrow, dear heart, to-morrow!"

He clasped the ground with outstretched hands, and bowed his head. When he looked up she was gone. And with her passing the night had changed to gray.

The sharp stones upon the path lacerated his flesh, sorrow's fangs were fastened in his heart. "God give me strength!" he prayed. "Strength to endure—strength to live—until the morrow dawns and all our tears are wiped away."

The stars went out; a cock crew; all was still.

CHAPTER XVI

A PROPOSAL

BETTY awoke early next morning, and hurried down to breakfast filled with joyous anticipation. Harry would be there; perhaps the night had brought him surcease from sorrow. When he had confided in her, they would put their heads together and find a way out of the difficulties which beset him. Perhaps the poor boy thought it wrong to love her and yet could not help himself. She would prove to him that there was no necessity to regret his love; that his life could be nobler, better, more useful with her aid than without it. She would teach him all the little things from which he had been so long shut out, awaken a thousand fresh interests in him, and find the more joy in doing so because he was hers. He had nothing to unlearn from others; only a great deal to learn from her, and she would begin the teaching as soon as possible. Life was so short; there was so much to do, so little time in which to do it. They would begin at once before that larger life opened in which time has no meaning. She wanted every second of this world for himself and her, so that it might be lived to the utmost.

Full of anticipatory delight at Harry's welcoming smile, Betty paused a moment on the threshold of the breakfast room. She hoped that none of the servants would be there; she wanted to be alone with him after that unspoken confession of last night. Perhaps, with the sweet sunlight streaming into the room, she could find words wherewith to tell him all that her eyes had said. She paused a moment, opened the door softly with a shy little murmur of "Harry!" and found—an empty room!

She conquered her unreasoning disappointment. And yet she wanted him so much! The mere sight of his face would prove that they had not been dreaming. "How foolish of me! Of course he is not up yet. We were so late last night that he must have been very tired." But the sunlight grew cold and hard. There was no sweetness in it without him. Surely, this laggard in love was not such a neophyte as to be unaware that she wanted to meet him alone. Smiling at her impatience, she sat down and waited. From the breakfast-room windows she could see the Rose Garden and live last night over again. How different it looked in the sunlight!

An hour passed, and still Harry did not come. When the servants entered the room with various dishes, she mechanically took her place at the head of the table, and made a pretense of eating. After the miserable meal was over she turned to one of

the maids: "Tell them to keep some things hot for Mr. Winchester. I shall be in the Rose Garden if anyone wants me."

In the Rose Garden it was little better, for the roses lacked the enchantment of his presence. Perhaps he was ill. How thoughtless of her not to have inquired! She would go back to the house at once and send someone to find out. Ah-h! There was his step on the path. At last! At last! Should she chide him for his tardiness! Should she—— But no. He should never hear reproaches from her lips. With a pretty pretense of hurt maidenly dignity, she looked across the moat and feigned to be absorbed in the distant prospect of hill and mead and vale. A water-hen ran across the lawn; she found its movements supremely interesting although there was a smile on her lips which was not caused by its sharp, erratic movements. What would Harry do? Become conscious of his crime and shyly await her pleasure, or——

His step grew nearer. It was wrong and wicked to turn her back upon him because he had kept her waiting, a petulant beginning of their real love story. She would pardon him his innocent offense, and confess her own in mistrusting him. How delicious this first little misunderstanding, how sweet the pleasure of listening to his self-reproaches! But no; she would not begin the day with even so transparent a pretense, and wheeled

round with a little cry, cheeks glowing, eyes shining, her hands outstretched towards this truant keeper of her heart. "You!" she said, and recoiled a step in bitter disappointment. "You!"

"Yes, they told me you were out here, so I ventured to come unannounced," said Sir Eustace. "Came over in the motor after an early breakfast."

Betty recovered herself with an effort. "It is rather early, isn't it?" she asked pointedly.

"Ah, you were evidently expecting someone. It is not too early for that. I regret, for my own sake, that I am not that somebody." Carne was annoyed by the coldness of her manner, or he would not have dared.

In order to hide her quivering lips, Betty turned her back upon him and began to pick roses. "So do I. If these are your early-morning manners," she said, in the keenness of her disappointment, "I should allow them to—to ripen a little before calling here. Did you want to see me about anything in particular? Mamma is not down yet."

She began to hum an air to show how much at ease she felt. And yet her heart throbbed painfully. Harry would not like to see Carne there; it would be a shock to meet him in that place of all places: it was sacred to them alone, and Carne desecrated it with his clumsy coming. "Did you really wish to see me about anything in particular?" she

asked coldly, for she wanted to be rid of him before Harry came on the scene.

"Ye-es, if you can spare me a few minutes." There was an unwonted humility about his tone which should have aroused her suspicion; but she was so full of her own disappointment at Harry's delay that, beyond a vague feeling of irritation at his presence, she was barely conscious of Carne's existence, and began to gather more roses as if she were in a great hurry. Carne, who kept a little behind her as she went round the different beds, tugged nervously at his mustache and turned a dirty white: she had angered him already.

"I wanted to ask you something," he said, so humbly that Betty was instantly disarmed and ashamed of her petulance.

She turned to him with a charming smile. "Anything I can do? Is it so very important that it will not keep until this afternoon?"

"Yes, it is a bit important," he said, and broke down. "I—I'd rather not wait until this afternoon."

Betty stood still in evident surprise. He possessed more real feeling than she had imagined. "Are some of the poor village people in trouble? What is it? Anything very dreadful?"

"Yes, it's the poor people in the village," said Carne. "They want a mistress desperately."

"But what has that to do with me?"

"Everything. Don't you know that I want you

to be their mistress—that I want you to marry me?"

"Marry—you! Oh!" The flowers dropped from her hands, and she stooped to pick them up.

"Yes—me!" Carne could hear the silence as he fumbled nervously with his riding-whip. All his glib assurance had vanished. "I want you very badly," he pleaded; "I do, indeed. I'd be an awfully decent fellow if you'd only marry me."

"Isn't this rather unusual? You do not say anything about love. When people marry, it is, or should be, for love."

"I thought you knew it," he burst out. "I've been in love with you for years, only I wanted to make sure of you."

"But I don't love you."

"That will come in time. Love always comes after matrimony, when people get to understand one another better. And I'm awfully well off. You can have everything you want."

"I don't want anything, thank you; and I am afraid that a love which does not come before matrimony is not likely to come after it. It grieves me to say it, but I don't even like you, and that is a poor basis on which to found mutual love and esteem."

"It's all that accursed monk!" he said savagely. "Before he came I had a chance. Now you are so infatuated with him that you can't bear the sight of

me. What is there in his puling face to catch your fancy?"

"Don't make matters worse. Can't you see that I wish to deal gently with you, to show you that you have made a mistake!"

"You haven't shown me much gentleness," he said moodily. "God knows you've always made the worst of me."

Betty's conscience smote her. She had been harsh to him. "It was absolutely necessary. If I had been kind to you, you would have misunderstood me. I have nothing to reproach myself with on that score, for I have never given you the slightest encouragement."

"Only be kind to me now, and I'll never misunderstand you again. Give me a chance, Betty. Give me a chance. It's all I want. I'll turn over a new leaf, go to church and all that sort of thing, carry out the Commandments—all of them—if you'll only marry me."

She smiled faintly. "You think so now. In a little while you would be your old self again, overbearing, arrogant, unkind, full of the pride of place and wealth. You are harsh to the poor, cruel to animals, respect nothing that I respect, love nothing that I love. We are utterly different. Forget that you have made such a mistake, and let us try to be friends."

"Friends! I have no patience with such milk-and-water sentiment. I want all or nothing."

"Then it must be—nothing! You must have known that I am not to be bought to go with the furniture at Carne."

"Take care, Betty. Take care! You shall marry me, whether you like it or not."

"You have no right to call me that," she said, with dignity. "If I am gentle with you, it is because I do not wish to hurt you. Forget all this. In a little while you will be glad I did not take you at your word. Go home and forget me. There are many girls who would make you far happier than I could."

"There never will be, there never can be," he said hoarsely. "I'm sick of everything. My father's money has been a curse in bringing me among people who only sneer and laugh at me. I can't live up to it. I haven't the tastes or manners necessary to live up to it, and I'm growing desperate. If you will have nothing to do with me, I shall go from bad to worse."

"A man is a poor thing if a woman's frown drives him to evil," she said coldly. "I fear I must leave you; but don't go away feeling like this. You have made a mistake. Let us forget it and try to be friends." The words cost her a manifest effort, though she spoke them bravely. She was so full of her own happiness that she could not bear to make him unhappy.

Then the devil in Carne awoke. "There is someone else. That is the meaning of your pretty

speeches about friendship and all that sort of thing. There is someone else! Don't rouse the devil in me, or I shall tell you something I did not mean to say when I started out this morning."

Betty disdained to answer him. "I think it is time you went," she said icily. "Perhaps it will be as well if you never return. We neither of us can forget this morning. You had better go."

"I dare say; and leave you to that bastard monk, for he is a bastard, and I can prove it. One moment, Betty. Listen to me!" He caught her by the hand, so roughly that the roses dropped to the ground again. "One moment. Marry me, and I will not speak. Refuse me, and everyone shall know about him—his shame—his father's and mother's shame also."

Betty faced him with flashing eyes. "Coward! I will not hear. I will not listen to your slanders. Go away—at once; never speak to me again. You are too vile to live in God's sunshine."

She looked round. Why did Harry still delay? She needed him to protect her against Carne, and he was so long in coming. A weak girl wanted a man's arms to shield her from insult. Why did he not come?

"Oh, Winchester will not show up—not he. I've no doubt he saw me coming, and is hiding somewhere."

"Hiding! From—you!"

"Yes—from me!"

"He must have changed very much since——" She glanced significantly at Carne's damaged eye.

"I've no doubt his mother will be here to look for him presently," he sneered. "Lady Geste seems unable to let her precious bastard out of her sight. I can't understand what there is about the fellow to account for your infatuation."

"You coward! Oh, you coward! If I were a man I——" The angry tears welled to her eyes, but with an effort she held them back.

"Yes, I dare say I am. If you'd promised to marry me, I'd have held my tongue. Promise me now, and no one shall know. I'll swear never to tell a living soul. Refuse, and all the world shall know it."

"It is not true."

"It is true. Ask Lady Geste. In spite of her cunning and effrontery, she'll have to admit it. Ask Winchester about his precious son. He'll have to admit it, too. Ask——"

There was a rustle on the grass, and Lady Geste came swiftly up to Carne and cut him sharply across the face with her light riding-whip. "Ask me!" she said calmly, as he recoiled from the anger in her eyes. "Ask me! I'm afraid this is dreadfully melodramatic, and all that sort of thing, but I really had to do it. It's a wonder to me that I didn't do it yesterday, but I didn't believe you'd dare to come here with such a story."

Betty caught Lady Geste by the arm. It was horrible to see a man chastised like a cur. "Oh, no! Oh, no!" she cried, and tried to take away the whip.

Lady Geste smilingly permitted her to have it, and Carne, seeing that he was safe from further punishment, made a step forward, a livid weal across his face. "You shall answer for this!" he said desperately. "You shall answer for this!"

"I am quite prepared to do so," said Lady Geste. "I've always laughed at this sort of thing before, but it had to be done—keep back, Betty, keep back—or I should never have retained a vestige of self-respect."

She thrust Betty back with a grasp of iron. "Now, Sir Eustace, I don't believe even you will break an absolute promise to a woman. I want your promise that your lips are to be sealed about this matter."

"Promise! You are mad!"

"Yes, practically, I am mad. You would be mad if you had lain awake all night wondering what was best to be done. If you set this scandal afloat I am ruined, this child's happiness is gone forever. Now, promise me. I give you ten seconds in which to make up your mind. That's all. Ten seconds; and that's five too many for you."

"And if I do not promise?"

"Then I am going to shoot you.—Keep still, child—still!—It may be absurd, but it's the only thing I can think of; and all the absurdity in the world won't bring you back to life again after I've done it. Remember that." She held a shining little toy of ivory and silver to his head. "And if you break your promise I swear before God that I will shoot you, though I have to follow you to the uttermost ends of the earth. Law, reason, justice, what are they when a woman is fighting for her own reputation, her son's happiness! You are a coward, and I know you to be one. Now, make up your mind whilst I count ten, or you won't be anything.—Don't move, Betty. You'll spoil my aim.—There are no servants about, and nothing can save you."

Carne, looking down the muzzle of her little deadly toy, saw that there was no help for him; that he must either swear or die, for this mad woman meant to keep her word, and that right speedily.

"Seven—eight—nine—" counted Lady Geste with the greatest deliberation, as if she were starting the competitors in a race. "One second more, and——"

"I swear," said Sir Eustace, shrinking back a little as she followed him up.

"Do it thoroughly," she cried. "There shall be no shuffling."

"I swear before God, by all I hold holy and

sacred, that I will never reveal the truth about you and your son to any living being," he said sullenly. "I'm not afraid—I'm not afraid——"

"Oh, yes, you are!"

"I'm not afraid of you or him. I'd made up my mind to go away quietly if Betty wouldn't have me, and not say a word about it; but I lost my temper and I spoke."

"You can go now.—Stop mumbling prayers, Betty; he isn't worth them." She waved Carne off contemptuously. "But remember! Now creep away through the sunlight like the whipped hound you are."

When he had gone Lady Geste threw the revolver to the ground. "The coward! To be afraid of a little thing like that! Did I hurt you, Betty? I'm so sorry. I've been thinking this over all night, and could bear it no longer."

Her mood changed as she sank on her knees beside Betty, who had hidden her face in her hands. "You may as well know the truth now. It's all true. I'm his mother; he's a child of shame. Are you going to give him up?"

Betty shrank back from her a little.

"Don't give him up, child; don't give him up! I'll go into a nunnery or do anything if you'll only be true to him. I'm not fit to touch you, but I'm his mother, and the poor fool loves me."

"Don't! You hurt me."

"Oh, Betty! Somehow I thought you were

different from other girls. I know I ought to have warned you in the beginning."

"Don't! Don't!"

Lady Geste got up from the grass. "Then it's no good, after all! The poor boy must go back to his monastery, because you haven't the courage to be true to him. You——"

"You misunderstand me. You—his mother! I give him up!" Betty's eyes flashed. "You think I haven't the courage to be true to him! I would face the whole world beside him this minute if this miserable secret were revealed. His shame shall be my joy. Give him up! You don't understand. I—I love him!"

"Then don't let's waste any time, but go in search of him," said Lady Geste, with feverish energy. "Winchester's already started."

"In search of him? I don't understand. What do you mean?"

"You will understand quite soon enough," said Lady Geste, burning with impatience. "He's gone back to Mahota to—to bury himself alive again!"

"To Mahota! Oh, Harry! Harry!" She tottered, but Lady Geste caught her.

"Yes, to Mahota. Now, pull yourself together, Betty. You're not a smelling-salts girl, but a true-hearted woman. We'll go to Mahota, too, if it's necessary."

She picked up the revolver from the grass. "Better not let the servants see this thing, or

they'll talk. Now, your mother will have to know all this shameful story, and there will be another fight with her; but I've taken this affair in hand, and I mean to see it through. If anyone had ever told me that I should do this sort of thing, I wouldn't have believed it. If we can't trace Harry before he sails, we'll go to New York, cross to Montreal, and thence to Mahota. Winchester's probably made up his mind to go, but even if he crosses in the same ship he can't tell the poor boy anything comforting. I'll think of what's to become of myself after I've made things right between you children. It's a pity there isn't such a thing as a public pillory nowadays, for I'd cheerfully go into it, and have people throw things at me." Then she began to cry.

Betty tried to comfort her. "I shall have to speak pretty plainly to your mother," said Lady Geste presently, wiping away her tears, "so it's just as well you will not be allowed to hear what I do say. But I'll straighten this thing out somehow. Never have anything to do with a woman who has a past, my dear. She'll either be so proud or so miserable about it that she'll make your own life not worth living. Now I must go home and put on a black dress, and face your mother. It's the hardest thing I've ever had to do, but I'll do it for your sake and his."

And she went home to array herself in penitential garb: she always looked well in black.

CHAPTER XVII

PEACE!

IT was snowing fast. In the lower part of the valley of Mahota there was already a fall of more than three feet. One by one the tall pines on the hilltops were blotted out from all semblance of trees, until they became mere amorphous masses against the dim and distant horizon:

"Proclaimed by all the trumpets of the sky,"

the snow came steadily earthwards, filling up the crevices in the broken ground, lodging upon the bent boughs of the cedars, on the lower slopes, drifting over unsightly stumps, beautifying all things, blotting out the familiar landscape, obliterating the highroad, covering the fences on both sides of it with an ever-thickening mantle. At night the lamps in the widely scattered farmhouses glimmered and disappeared again through a world of white; they might have been mere phantom will-o'-the-wisps for all the succor they afforded half-blind, belated travelers. Not a dog barked, not a silver sleigh-bell made merry music for the ear. No human being dared venture abroad alone when Death took the road and lurked in every drift and

hollow. His touch was so soft, his kiss so gentle, that even the little children were unafraid until warned by their elders that to rest by the wayside and catch the falling flakes meant a soft, gradual, insidious sleep from which they would never wake again. Sometimes a bough cracked beneath its crystalline burden; sometimes a giant tree swayed, hung heavily, tottered and trembled to its fall, followed by the eager snow which hid its ruin beneath a robe of virgin white.

The frozen Ottawa no longer sparkled in the sun; its dull white surface was marked out with pine branches as a guide to strangers crossing to Mahota. In the village below the monastery, winter porches to the houses kept away all intrusive snow. Double windows had long been fitted into place, and the logs which were destined to feed the giant stoves by day and night lay split and dried ready for use. In the cellars below the houses were stored frozen carcasses of bullocks hard as iron, innumerable fowls rigid and shapeless. The valley had begun its long five-months' sleep beneath its mantle of snow; for five months no blade of grass could greenly grow, no living animal wander through the fields. In the forest depths bears sought the shelter of hollow trees, and slept away the weary days and nights. Wolverine, fox, and lynx made desperate shifts for food, coming down nearer to the settlements in search of unconsidered trifles. The timid deer, fleeing from packs of

gaunt wolves, flitted like shadows through the night. And ever the snow fell, unhasting, unresting, softening the sharp outlines of the hills, blurring the distant plains, hiding the mountain streams.

From day to day the great Percherons stood idle in the monastery stables; until the snowfall ceased there was no work for them to do. Patient cows solemnly chewed the cud or fed on fragrant hay pulled down from the teeming lofts. The one-armed poultryman, clad in a shaggy bearskin, crept disconsolately among his feathered friends, seeking for frost-bitten toes. More than once he had found a white spot in the center of his own thin cheek, sure sign of frostbite. A handful of snow rubbed against it to take out the frost, and he wandered round again, looking for disabled hens, or grimly jested with the half-witted scullion who peeled the monastery potatoes by the porch in summer, and, crouching by the roaring stove in the kitchen, peeled them still. The black walls of the monastery grew spotless white, its outer galleries choked up with drifting snow, its chapel bell became a muffled monotone. But day and night, in spite of the falling snow, the monks prayed and worked and interceded for the souls of men. All seasons were alike to them. What mattered summer heat or winter frost when their eyes were fixed upon the Cross, and every few minutes the solemn tolling of the chapel bell warned them that all

things earthly must pass away! "A-way!—A-way!—A-wa-ay!" The half-dug grave in the little cemetery was filled with snow; the dried, hollow stalks of the giant sunflowers which made so brave a show in the summer heat, now rattled in the wind as they fell across it. The cloister garden lay buried under a blanket of ermine. No man went abroad save at the call of necessity—no man save one; and he, clad in the brown robe of a lay Brother, paced up and down in the courtyard of a little log-house (the original dwelling of the monks of La Trappe when they first reached Mahota) which commanded a view of the highroad, waiting for someone who did not come.

Sometimes the Abbot joined him. They were about the same age, and the Abbot had humored this stranger's whim of wearing monastic garb, had given him permission to fare as the monks fared, and even spoke to him at rare intervals. This was Winchester's tardy penance for the sins of his youth. For three months he had watched and waited for the son who never came; for three months, he had lived the life of an anchorite; for three months, he had slept little, ate less, worked in the fields until the falling snow drove him to seek reluctant shelter beneath the monastery walls. Harry had suffered this life for nine years; surely he could suffer it also. And so he worked and prayed and watched, as Harry had worked, prayed, and watched all through his lonely little life.

Mahota was his present refuge from the cares and maladies which beset him. When Harry came he would straighten out things and, if possible, if God gave him long enough to live, take the lad back to the world. In the meantime Betty and her mother and Lady Geste were staying in Montreal, seeking Harry far and wide. And still he did not come. Betty did not doubt. Her cheerful courage—cheerful when others could not see her tears—reanimated Lady Geste, and fixed the purpose of that fickle dame to stay in Canada until the wanderer should be found. Sometimes she declared that he was not worth the waiting; then she shed penitent tears and went for a sleigh drive round the Mountain in order to pass the time.

Winchester fell ill. He would not let Betty know of his illness, and, in reply to her imploring letter to be permitted to come to him, told her that no woman was allowed to set foot in Mahota, that she also must be content to wait until Harry's return. He was probably wandering through America as a penance, before returning to the monastery to take the irrevocable vows. He pictured the poor lad fighting against himself, striving against his love for the world, his love for Betty, his love for his father and mother. By and by, worn out with the struggle, exhausted and at peace, he would return to Mahota, take up his cross, and bear it meekly to the end. The lad had done wisely not to come back at once. The sudden

transition from a life of activity to that of the somber monastic régime would have driven him mad; and so, he was, in all probability, wandering about, doing good works, forgetting his sorrow in alleviating the sorrows of others, and gradually preparing himself for the lonely life of La Trappe.

But he would come back. It was only a question of time. Other refuge he had none save the shelter of Mahota. He would return to it again, even as he had come so many years ago; and the good Abbot would take him in and minister to him, heal his wounds, lead him back to Christ. Oh, yes, he would come back chastened, sorrow-stricken, yet loving Betty and vainly striving to forget her. He must not forget her. He should be told that Betty knew everything, that his mission was to love and cherish and protect her from all the ills of life, and not to bury himself in Mahota whilst she longed for him in vain. His life did not belong to himself; it was no longer his to dispose of, but hers. Some day he would take her back to England, and they would live honored, happy, useful lives until the distressful past became a blurred and blotted dream.

As the days went by, Winchester rapidly grew worse. He took a childish pleasure in refusing to see the monastery doctor. Since Harry did not come, life had nothing to offer him, nothing which induced him to cling to it. The faithful Parsons,

who loved Winchester in his cockney way, nursed him day and night, and went nearly mad with grief and anxiety. At last he could bear the strain no longer, and told his master that he was going to Montreal to fetch a doctor and to inform Lady Geste and the Anstruthers how ill he was. "It's no good sayin' you're not ill, for you are, sir," he said wistfully, "and off I goes if I can get a sleigh to-morrow morning. I've made signs to the Abbot, and written it all down on a piece of paper, and he wrote down underneath it as he'd send down a lay Brother to look after you while I'm away. If you stop here like this, sir, you'll die. You can't eat the food, you aint got a proper doctor, and it's that draughty in this old 'ut, it's enough to kill anybody. You're sure you won't let me drive you down to Montreal, sir? If you was well wropt up in furs, we could do it by easy stages, and have you took care of till you've got your 'eart well again."

But Winchester shook his head. Harry might come back in his absence and do something desperate. His one object in life was to straighten out this horrible entanglement caused by his own and another's wrongdoing. There was no disguising the fact that he was very ill. Sorrow, remorse, anxiety about Harry, exposure in the monastery fields, the unaccustomed food, had all done their work. The life was rapidly going out of him, and he was tired of everything. The one

thing for him to do was to see Harry again, and then nothing else mattered.

He wrote a brief note to Lady Geste, who had long since taken to colors again. "I am dying," he said; "I feel it. I did you a great wrong once; and you did me one also. Let us repair the wrong as far as we can. Make all the necessary arrangements and bring a clergyman with you. That will put you right in a measure with regard to Harry. You will thus have something to go upon before the world. There is no need for the world to know anything, since Carne writes to me that he will keep his word. No one but an astonishing woman like you could have made him do it. Do not delay longer than you can help, for my time is short. If I do not see Harry again, you must stay near here till he comes, and explain to him that my one desire was to atone to him for all the evil I have wrought, to secure his and Betty's happiness. You are a peculiar woman, but sorrow has given you a heart, and I do not think you will deny my request."

He gave the letter to Parsons and watched him prepare to set out. At the last moment Parsons' heart failed him. There was death in Winchester's face, and he saw it. "P'rhaps I'd better stop. I don't like to leave you, sir. I could find an Indian from the village to take the letter."

"Nonsense!" said Winchester testily. "You know he'd get drunk and lose it. Don't waste

time standing there, but get back as quickly as possible. You ought to be here again some time to-morrow."

When Parsons had reluctantly driven off with a parting injunction from Winchester to remember that the rule of the road in Canada is the reverse of that in England, and the jingling of his sleigh-bells had died away upon the frosty air, the invalid turned his face to the wall as if to sleep. There were various slops and soups on a little table by his bed, and the Abbot had promised to send down a lay Brother to look after the fire.

But the day wore on and Winchester was still alone. In these bitter moments his thoughts reverted to Fraser. Did Fraser want to see him again? Fraser liked him; but it would be necessary to explain his presence there, to re-tell the whole story, and he must husband his remaining strength. No; he would not send for Fraser, for Fraser would involuntarily recall to mind that newly made grave at which they had both looked when the glory of early spring was spread over the land in lieu of this eternal mantle of snow.

As the daylight gradually faded, Winchester, with difficulty, contrived to light the lamp. Exhausted by the effort, he lay on his back and stared at the little ring of light it made on the rough plastered ceiling. It was melancholy work to lie there alone, longing for someone who never came.

The door slowly opened as he wearily turned to

the wall again. Someone scraped his snowshoes in the porch, and a gust of cold air blew through the room. Probably the Abbot had seen the light from the monastery, and had sent a lay Brother to atone for his forgetfulness. But Winchester wanted to hear the sound of a human voice, not to have a ghostly Brother flitting noiselessly about, and staring at him with sad eyes from the corners of the room. No; he would not look at him. He had always disliked shaven crowns; the sooner Parsons returned with a doctor, the better.

The monk put his snowshoes in a corner of the porch, knocked softly at the door, and entered. Winchester's only recognition of his presence was to raise a thin hand and wave it without turning his face from the wall. The monk put back his hood, and sat down by the bedside waiting until it should be Winchester's pleasure to say whether he wanted anything.

For half an hour Winchester lay perfectly still. From time to time he could hear the monk pattering softly about in stockinged feet, replenishing the fire, and putting a basin of soup on top of the stove to warm. Presently, the heat of the room seemed to overpower him. He leaned heavily against the wall, recovered himself, fell back again. His deep, regular breathing showed that he slept at the post of duty.

Winchester listened with grim satisfaction. This forgetfulness on the lay Brother's part meant

a penance for the morrow. Then his heart smote him at such unkindness to a man who had come to nurse him. He turned round and put his hand upon the sleeper's arm.

The monk awoke with a surprised cry, "Father! Father!"

"Harry! You have come back!"

"Yes, my father, I have come back. Father! Father! I have come back!"

He was thin, wasted, worn. A downy yellow beard hid his chin, his violet eyes were filled with the light that comes from God alone. He was not the Harry of a few months ago, but a man—a man who had learned to know what life really is—a man who had overcome temptation by sorrow and tears and prayer—a man who had learned to know himself at last—who had recognized God's purpose in creating him—a man who had suffered, and was strong with the strength of suffering and faith.

"Do not speak, my father; you are ill."

Winchester raised himself on one elbow, and quizzically regarded him. Even then he tried to hide his joy, although the love in his eyes belied the lightness of his tone. "What an unconscionable fellow you are, Harry! You've kept me waiting here for three months, when you might just as well have come to me to help you."

Harry was holding his father's hand as if he never meant to let it go again.

"So you think I was wrong to take you out of

the monastery, and you are going back into it?" asked Winchester.

"No, my father. I am not going back into the monastery; it is not my intention to become a monk."

"No! Then why are you here?"

Harry put one arm round his father's neck. "Bear with me yet a moment, my father. In my grief and sorrow at the shame which had overtaken me, I thought only of myself. My one object was to flee from the world, to hide myself forever. I did not think of you—how you must have suffered also. But as I paced the deck of the vessel which was bringing me to New York, the voice of God came to me in the night, and I knew that I belonged to the world—His world; that He had brought me into it; that I could better serve Him there than by fostering a selfish sorrow within the walls of Mahota. And so——" He hesitated.

"And so?" There was a happier light in Winchester's eyes as he listened.

"And so I began my ministry to others the next morning. I helped to lighten the burdens of the poor emigrants on board, went West with them when we reached New York, saw them established in their new homes, worked with them, showed them how to till the soil, comforted them in their afflictions, until something whispered to me to turn my steps towards Mahota, and explain to the Abbot that I could never take the final vows, but must be

free to work in the world. I meant to write to tell you all that had happened to me. It grieves me, my father, that you are ill. Tell——! But you must be hungry. Here is your soup."

He went to the stove, and brought the bowl of soup. Then he sat down on the bed, supported Winchester in his arms, and put the spoon to his lips. "See, my father, this is the way the Abbot fed me when I first came to Mahota, when he took me in and warmed and comforted me, and I fell asleep in his arms."

"But you left Mahota, Harry, and I never shall —alive." Nevertheless, he took some of the soup, and rallied considerably. After all the misery of the last three months, all the patient sorrow and endurance of waiting, the lad had come back, not crushed, broken, dispirited, but stronger, saner, firmer in every way. The realities of life had seized hold of him; he was no longer a dreamer, but a man of action, fit to take his place with other men—a man who would meet others on more than equal terms and make a stir in the world. Winchester looked at him with increasing happiness. "You were nearly too late, Harry. Now, it is your turn to eat. The Abbot was going to send down a lay Brother to look after my wants, but I suppose he forgot all about me."

"Forgot you!"

"Yes, that was why I turned my face to the wall when you came in just now. I didn't want to be

bothered by a stranger—even a tongueless one. I feel ever so much better for your coming, Harry. It's only a momentary flash in the pan, though—a question of hours."

Harry held his father's hands in his firm, strong grip. "Alas! my father. I thought only of myself and not of you. How shall I answer to God for this?"

"That's all right, my boy; that's all right. I thought only of myself for a good many years, or you wouldn't have been here. Better call it square. Since I first saw you again, I knew you would come out all right in the end if you only had your chance. And I gave you your chance, lad, I gave it to you, and now you know how much it means, to you. You are no longer a praying machine, but a man—with a man's hopes, and passions, and fears—with a man's strength and weakness. After all, a man is not a mystical dreamer who drones away the days and nights whilst others reap the sweetness and glory of living. Thank God for that, Harry, thank God for that. I shall not see it, but with Betty at your side, you will do great things—great things!"

He leaned back, panting, and was silent for a little while, wondering how he should break the news to Harry that his mother and Betty were in Montreal. The lad was so unselfish, so occupied in ministering to Winchester that he would not ask a single question about them, although his heart

starved for news. Still, his father needed care, and must be his first consideration. He piled more wood in the stove, trimmed the lamp, and then proceeded to satisfy his own hunger, staying from time to time in the very act of lifting the food to his mouth to smile at Winchester with grave tenderness and see that he needed nothing.

"Where is Parsons?" he asked suddenly. "When I went away from Antholin, I left word for him to go back for you."

"He's started for Montreal in search of a doctor, and will not be back till to-morrow. He has also gone to—fetch your mother!"

The lad paled beneath the unexpectedness of Winchester's speech. Surely, his mother's love for him must be great if she remained all this time in Canada awaiting his return.

"Your mother will bring Betty with her," said Winchester, raising himself on his elbow, and eagerly watching the effect of his words. It seemed to him the clearest way of explaining to Harry that Betty knew everything.

Harry's bowl fell to the ground with a crash. He remained staring at Winchester with questioning eyes, but made no sign. At last it dawned upon him what Winchester meant. "She waits—for—me!" he said. "For—me!"

"For you, lad—you! If you had only had a little more faith, you might have spared her, and all of us, much pain."

Harry bowed his head in deep contrition. "I did not know—I did not think. My one impulse was to get away, to spare you all. That was why I went. I did not mean that anyone should be sacrificed for me. I left you all because I loved you."

He went on his knees beside his father.

"I understand; it's all right, Harry. Now pick up that bowl, and go on with the remains of your supper. When your mother comes to-morrow we will legalize our union and thus, at any rate, make things easier for you. She'll be here to-morrow. Oh, yes, she's sure to come to-morrow."

For a little while he lay regarding the ring of light on the ceiling. "I'm not going to get better, Harry; I know it, I feel it. There's an old fad, whim, call it what you will, of mine which I want you to carry out for me, if you'll only promise to arrange it all."

"I promise, my father."

"I want to be buried somewhere near Mahota. The last time I was here I helped to dig my own grave. It was waiting for me then, though I didn't know it."

"But why——?"

"Oh, a mere whim. Besides, I shall feel safer near Mahota. Of course, I know it's an odd fancy. And, now and again, when in the after years the world is too much with you, come and see me, lad, and remember that it was once too far."

"Father!"

"I couldn't rest with the din of the world in my ears; I couldn't rest. Lay me at the foot of the valley where I can hear the organ call to prayer, the humming of bees in the flowers, lowing of cattle and neigh of horse. If I were there, the Brothers would surely pray for me, heretic though I be. Let me have my whim, Harry, and bury me near Mahota, if you love me!"

"If I——"

"Yes, lad, if you love me. I have wasted my life—somehow; it has been so different from what I once meant it to be. I had ideals—once; and I met your mother: she hadn't any."

"She is my mother."

"Right, lad, right. I'm a coward to speak of her in that way. But I haven't lived up to my ideals, and even in death the knowledge will sting me unless I can lie in this lonely valley until the hand of God once more raises me out of darkness into the light."

"Into the light, my father?"

"Yes, lad; into the light. I have sinned as a man sins, I have loved as a man loves, and, now it is all so dark, so dark. There was a woman once, blue-eyed and innocent and pure, fresh as the rosy-fingered dawn, fair as a flower; and I did not know she loved me until—I loved your mother. Remember this, Harry, and cherish her daughter in the happy days to come. These eyes will never

look on her again, this hand never clasp hers. I wed your mother at the mouth of the grave, and Betty's mother will never know that the memory of my sin has kept me apart from her until the end—until the very end. Promise me, lad, promise. I don't ask your forgiveness, because I know it has always been mine. All I ask you now is to be good to Betty—and to—her!"

Harry promised. Now he understood his father's bitter, cynical outlook, his disbelief in women, his contempt for his fellows. The right woman had not come to him in life; and when the right woman does not come to a man, he is merely a husk, a shadow, a dreamer of idle dreams, a cumberer of the ground.

A lay Brother entered, mutely greeted Harry as if he had seen him only yesterday, and motioned to him to sleep whilst he watched by the sick man.

Winchester gently told the lay Brother to leave him. He wanted to be alone with Harry, to feel that he had found peace at last. And the lay Brother, not understanding him in the least, but true to his vows of obedience, uncomplainingly went out into the night.

Thus left together, father and son talked of many things, until the pale radiance of the Northern Lights glimmered into the room and the lamp grew dim. "Don't try to silence me, lad," said Winchester. "It may be for the last time."

And Harry, long after Winchester slept, knelt

beside him with anguished entreaties to God to spare his father's life. For hours he remained there until the gray dawn crept into the curtainless room, and he rose stiffened and chilled in every limb.

Winchester, sleeping happily, had a faint color in his cheeks, his breath came evenly, he seemed to be regaining a fictitious strength for the ordeal before him.

Harry went to the window and looked out at Mahota, a palace of white marble warmed into life by the rising sun. But it no longer held him in thrall. As he moved away from the window the sun fell full on the sick man's face and woke him. "I was afraid to wake up and find it only a dream," he said. "Now I know it is all true. You'll stay with me, Harry, to the end?"

"Yes," said Harry. "My father, I will stay with you till the end; you shall sleep in Mahota; and when the world is too much with me, Betty and I will come and talk with you again, and you shall teach us how to live."

CHAPTER XVIII

THE JOINING OF HANDS

AS the day wore on Harry became increasingly anxious, for the improvement in Winchester was but temporary, and the excitement of waiting for Lady Geste's and Betty's arrival, began to have a prejudicial effect on him. He tossed restlessly about from side to side, and grew weaker again; but at last the jingle of distant sleigh-bells announced Parsons' return, and the large double sleigh dashed up to the door, Parsons, in his impatience to see his master, not waiting to help the ladies out. He hastily ran up the steps and disappeared in the porch. When he returned, the Church of England clergyman he had brought with him was assisting Lady Geste and Betty to alight. As Winchester had not asked for Mrs. Anstruther, she had reluctantly remained at Montreal. Lady Geste noticed Parsons' suppressed excitement, and feared the worst.

"How is Mr. Winchester?" asked Betty. "Can I see him—at once?" She looked round at the bleak little hut and shivered; it seemed so forlorn a place in which to die.

"Yes, miss," said Parsons, deferentially touch-

ing his hat; for Betty was a great favorite of his, and Antholin carried far more prestige than Geste, which was only sham Elizabethan.

Even her anxiety about Harry had not prejudicially affected Lady Geste's appearance. She was beautifully dressed in costly furs, her eyes were as clear as a child's, and the healthful color of her cheeks betokened that the bracing cold of a Canadian winter agreed with her. On the other hand, Betty was thin and pale. She had lost her customary look of radiant happiness, and her eyes wore the sad expression of a woman who is acquainted with grief, whose pillow is wet with midnight tears. In the present instance she was doubly sad, for Parsons had not concealed the fact from her that his master's days were numbered. Betty had always been a favorite of Winchester's, and she had implored him time after time to allow her to help him bear his trouble, for she, better than anyone else, divined the shock he had suffered in losing the son from whom he had hoped so much. Now his life was going out in sorrow and disappointment, and, unless some news arrived of the fugitive, his anguish must continue to the end.

"Come, Betty," said Lady Geste, shaking out the folds of her neat, tailor-made skirt, "don't look like that; you'll frighten the poor fellow. How I do detest these overshoes! They quite spoil the shape of one's feet."

In spite of her attempt to reassure Betty, Lady

Geste was distinctly nervous. She was not much given to sentiment; but the knowledge that she was once more to meet the man who had wronged her and whom she had also wronged, was a little disconcerting. Winchester's tastes and sarcastic proclivities had long ago alienated him from her heart. Had he been a different man, the circumstances in which she was now to meet him would never have arisen. But, she philosophically reflected, a man cannot permanently change his nature any more than a leopard can change his spots. He may vary for a little while under the influence of a strong passion, but with the waning of that passion the original Adam in him is certain to reassert itself. No woman, however, unless she be wholly callous, can look back upon the memory of a past love and remain utterly indifferent to it. Although she may survive the love, there remains in her heart a lurking tenderness, especially if the passion be an illicit one, for the man who once transformed her commonplace, workaday world into a fairy realm. All violent delights have violent ends, and Lady Geste, with the aid of worldly experience, was content to recognize the fact. She would make Winchester's last moments sweet to him, help him to start upon his journey of all days disburdened of at least one regret. She would forgive him for his conduct to herself. In addition, she was so full of radiant life and health and strength that no sorrow could wholly crush or sub-

due her—no sorrow save one. If she were never to see Harry again, then she would indeed look upon the world as having lost its savor. Poverty and loneliness were the bugbears of her old age: she could survive the one, but not the other. Harry was sure to return to Mahota. If he could only be kept from reassuming the monkish habit, from taking the final vows, all would yet be well. Winchester had been invaluable as a watch-dog at the monastery gate. If he were to die, she must take his place. She knew enough of human nature to be aware that, with Betty's assistance, her task would be easy. And her own influence over Harry was so great that she felt sure of success. These phantoms of men who called themselves monks, had, in all probability, quitted the world because they were afraid of it—particularly the women in it. When a man ran away from the world and put up a board on the outskirts of his retreat saying that all women were forbidden to come near it, there was no doubt that he was afraid of them, and greatly afraid.

She must not keep Winchester waiting. Full of facile compassion for him, she shook off the snow from her skirt, and followed Betty into the hut, after glancing angrily at Mahota's walls: it annoyed her to think that there should be so enduring a monument of what she chose to consider a fundamental misconception of man's attitude towards woman. The mere fact of so fleshless a creature

as a monk presuming to forbid her entering his retreat, at once filled her with a consuming desire to take possession of it—and of him.

Winchester, with Harry's assistance, had dressed himself carefully. His cheeks were sunken and cadaverous, his hands thin and white; otherwise there was very little to distinguish him from the Winchester of everyday life. The same half-mocking, half-cynical expression played about his lips, and he made a feeble effort to rise as Lady Geste and Betty came into the room.

His weakness, more than anything else, appealed to Lady Geste. She went up to the rough couch on which he sat, bent over it, and kissed him warmly. "You're quite right, and I was wrong," she declared. "We ought to have done it years ago. You wanted to, but we should have worried one another into premature graves, and I had the wisdom to see that and refuse you."

"I don't want to impose on your good nature," said Winchester faintly. "You fully understand that it is for your sake and the boy's?"

"Of course I do. Never mind me, but think only of the boy," she said, in vexed tones. "I'm sorry I've brought you to this. We never could reason things out, and we've both paid the penalty."

"Both!"

"Yes, yes—both. Now, don't be bitter. Both of us. Because I look radiant and well and happy, don't think I haven't suffered. It's that admirable

physique of mine which prevents you from seeing the wreck I really am. You don't know how I lie awake at nights, thinking of that poor boy battling with his sorrow without me to help him. Oh, yes, I know I'm an inhuman creature, but I'm not as inhuman as all that."

She knelt down beside him and put her hands in his. "Now, Bruce, don't let us use any more bitter words to one another or have any hard feelings about the matter. We've outraged the conventionalities, and have had to pay the price of our folly. Thousands of people outrage the conventionalities every day, only they are wiser than we are and don't get found out. It is only when the consequences of a thing like this come home to us, and innocent people suffer, that we begin to see the wickedness of it. If we had our lives to live over again, we should profit by this experience and act differently; at least I should. I worried poor Geste into the grave, I've nearly worried you into it, and if I cannot find Harry I shall probably worry myself into it. My affection for him is the one thing I can't explain to myself. I've been heartless to other people, why shouldn't I be heartless to him? But the feeling's there, and I've got to make the best of it. I've explained all that is necessary to this gentleman here" (the clergyman kept discreetly in the background), "and he is quite ready to perform the ceremony which will make us man and wife. If you'll only try to get better, I'll do my

best to be a good wife to you, although it doesn't seem really legal without a bishop, and bridesmaids, and presents, and all that sort of thing."

Winchester smiled. "You really are a wonderful woman. Sometimes I think you don't know how wonderful you are; at other times I have my doubts. No one but you would have thought it possible that we could pick up the threads of our lives again and unravel the tangled skein we made of them. Whatever it was that drew us together and is answerable for all our follies, it has vanished now. Perhaps if I had been a different man, you would have been a different woman. I've been a good deal to blame in not protecting you from yourself and myself. But this disastrous chapter in our lives is nearly closed; let us bury it without mutual recriminations. After all, we loved one another—once."

Easily moved to emotion, she took his thin hand in hers. "We did, Bruce, we did, and I'm a miserable, guilty woman that we didn't go on loving to the end of the chapter. But I never had any patience with you or anybody else. It all comes of being a vicar's daughter and being shut out from the life one pants to see. The things you can't do are always so much more inviting than those everyone expects you to do. I was as much in a monastery as poor Harry, only I took the wrong way of getting out of it. Constituted as I am, you can't make me see things differently, and

it's no use trying. I never thought to kiss you again; but there!"

She kissed him. "Now, we've buried the past, and you've forgiven me all my shortcomings. I didn't expect to be married in a place like this." She cast a disparaging glance at his poverty-stricken surroundings. "I suppose there's no help for it?"

"No, I'm afraid not. We shall have to do without the customary picturesque accessories."

She detected the gleam of mockery which even the imminent shadow of death could not wholly suppress, and her eyes flashed back a comprehending glance. "That was always the worst of it," she said. "You understood me so much better than I did myself; and that is the hardest thing in the world for a woman to forgive when a man ruthlessly strips her of her petty shams and meannesses and shows her to herself in all her nakedness. Still, we won't talk of that now; it's all over and done with."

"Yes," said Winchester grimly, "I've talked enough. I want to get on with my dying. I suppose you have arranged all the necessary formalities?"

"Of course. That's one of the advantages of Canada: you can be married even in a place like this."

"After all, the place doesn't matter." He beckoned to the minister to approach.

All this time there was no word of Harry, Lady Geste naturally assuming that Winchester had heard nothing of him. Besides, she did not wish to distress an obviously dying man with superfluous questions. This whim of Winchester's must he carried out for Harry's sake, although, as a matter of fact, so tardy an act of reparation would not alter his legal status with regard to herself and Winchester. Still, Winchester had doubtless made a will, leaving his money to Harry, and could now quit the world with a conscience void of offense. The ethical point of view did not trouble Lady Geste in the least. She had been brought up on ethics, and somewhat bitterly reflected that the main impulse of people who have been brought up on ethics is to escape from their appalling monotony at the very first opportunity. She had escaped, but at what price!

To Betty, as she stood there, watching Lady Geste and Winchester become man and wife, the scene had a truer meaning, a deeper significance: she realized the full force of Winchester's last act —that it was the outward and symbolic expression of a great truth brought home to him after much suffering and wandering up and down on the face of the earth; that if he had his life to live over again, he would act differently, with a wider knowledge, an instinctive realization that sin is its own punishment, its own Nemesis. She loved Lady Geste for Harry's sake, but she did not profess to

understand her; even Lady Geste did not attempt to understand herself—which, perhaps, was just as well for her own peace of mind; for if she had once realized the preposterous enormity of her conduct she would in all probability have committed suicide. As it was, she went through the marriage ceremony with perfect self-possession, and a certain apologetic air of kindness to Winchester for having delayed it for so many years. It was rather a descent from her present position to become plain Mrs. Winchester; but at least it was salvation in the social sense. When Harry came back it would be his duty, if he considered it necessary, to attend to her salvation from the other point of view; but that was a matter which would keep for an indefinite period.

It was an impressive ceremony, with Parsons standing in the background as a witness in order that the law might be fulfilled. It was not his idea of a wedding. Still, it was the best that could be done in the circumstances, and if his master felt satisfied, it was not for him (Parsons) to object. It was a pity that Master Harry was not there to comfort Miss Anstruther, who was visibly distressed; but Master Harry had always been a rather unaccountable young gentleman, although devoted to his father.

When the ceremony was over and the necessary documents had been filled up, there was a pause. Winchester leaned back on his couch, pale and ex-

hausted, and beckoned to Betty. "Come here, child."

Betty came to the dying man's couch. Her heart was full of loneliness, of unrequited love, of sorrow for Winchester, who had always been kind to her.

"Tell me, Betty," said Winchester, softly stroking her shining hair, "tell me if you still care for Harry. If he were to come back and claim your love, would you give it to him in spite of—in spite of everything?"

"Yes," said Betty, almost inaudibly, as if she did not wish the others to hear her make so sacred a confession. "Yes. I will wait for him, and be true to him."

"He may not come for years."

"I will wait."

"But sorrow saddens life, Betty. Someone else may want to claim you, lay its roses at your feet."

"It will make no difference; I should see only the thorns, unless Harry brought them."

"But you are young, beautiful. It is a sad thing to be always alone, Betty, to watch the wrinkles come, to see hair that was golden become gray, to feel your beauty wane because you are true to a lover who is growing old in the shadow of yonder monastery. Think of that, Betty, and all it means. You have known him for such a little while, and life is so long, child, so long. Have you counted the cost, do you realize all that it means?"

"Yes, I have counted the cost; I know all that it means; and my choice is made."

"For good and all?"

"For good and all."

"Think of the dreary days!"

"I love him."

"The bitter loneliness!"

"He will be lonelier still."

"The anguish of living!"

"He also is living."

"Some day he will die, and you will not know; you will remain and weep bitter tears for a man who is already dead. Suppose he can never come, that the monastery grips him still! Even if he outlived you, he would pray to heaven to forget you, that the memory of his brief love might be blotted out. Think well, Betty, before you make your choice. The way is long, the path is hard to find. Through stress and storm, through sunlit and sunless days, you would have to walk alone, Betty, no hand to stay you when you falter by the way, no arm to lean upon, no voice to whisper comfort when the darkness closes round you as it is now closing round me. Love endureth but for a little, and life is long—so long! Sorrow and tears abide when the memory of past joy is forgotten. It is an awful thing, Betty, to stand on the threshold and know that you must not knock at Love's door, that you can never enter, never hear little children's voices, never feel the clinging sweetness of baby

fingers, never know a husband's tender care. Think, Betty, think, and—decide."

Betty looked into his haggard face, and her eyes were as the stars of heaven. She took his hands, and at her quiet touch God's peace descended on his troubled soul. "To love once," she said, in a whisper, "is to love always. If God's hand takes away the good it hath given, shall I curse God and die? If the way is long and dreary, hard and high to climb, heaven's gates are open at the end of it, God's mercy awaits me after the travail and trouble of life are done. I shall not weep, I shall not fear, I shall not falter by the way, but, firm in faith and purpose, journey to the end. I had not thought to say so much to any man, to open my very soul to you. But God's hand is on you, God calls you to His presence for the judgment that must come to all. If it will make your parting easier to know that I shall endure in steadfast truth, know it now; if it will spare you one pang to learn that these eyes will never gaze on any other man than Harry with looks of love, learn it now. If you still doubt, if you still disbelieve, I call upon Harry, wherever he may be, to hear my vow. If——"

The door opened silently, and someone clad in the brown robe of a lay Brother entered the room.

"I have come, my father. I have seen the Abbot, and I am free," he began, then paused and looked wildly round. "Betty! Betty!"

He flung himself down beside her in a paroxysm

of worship, wonder, and delight. "Betty! Betty! Betty!"

Winchester motioned them to come to him, joined their hands, fell back, and died!

From the tall tower of the monastery there floated forth upon the wintry wind the solemn warning from heaven to earth that man endureth but for a moment, and must pass away. Sad-eyed monks, kneeling before the Stations of the Cross, bowed their heads in fervent prayer to the Crucified One who came to save mankind. They prayed with feverish haste, their hands uplifted to the Crown of Thorns, in passionate pity and supplication for the sins of the world.

And the mild eyes of the Christ looked down upon them as they prayed—looked down and made no sign!

FINIS

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